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FIVE TESTS FOR EUROPE

The Times
looks forward to what must
change before any referendum page 21

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Sterling could vanish in five years

Blair begins battle for the euro

By PHILIP WEBSTER
POLITICAL EDITOR

TONY BLAIR yesterday set Britain on a course that could see the end of sterling within five years.

He prepared the stage for one of the biggest political battles of the century by launching a 30-month campaign to persuade the country that it should enter the European single currency.

In a marked shift of gear, the Prime Minister gave business the signal that it has been demanding of the Government's intent to take Britain into the euro if the economic conditions are right.

He announced that legislation is to be rushed through to enable tens of millions of pounds to be spent in each of three departments — Social Security, the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise — to make their computer systems compatible for the euro.

He outlined a timetable for British entry to the euro and the abolition of sterling considerably shorter than that being followed by the 11 European Union countries already in euro-land.

Although Mr Blair insisted that British membership was not inevitable, the reaction of leading business organisations and senior pro-Europeans across the political divide confirmed that they believe he has taken his biggest step so far towards that goal. Companies had complained that Mr Blair could not expect them to



'Mr Blair has given lobbyists for monetary union the signal they have long demanded'

— *Leading article, page 21*
Debate, page 10
Peter Riddell, page 11
George Warming, page 25

stump up the £3.5 billion needed to convert to the euro if the Government was not itself giving a stronger commitment, including the spending of cash.

As Mr Blair presented a 65-page "national changeover plan" to prepare the country for the option of going into the euro, he made plain that he would put himself at the head of the "Yes" campaign in a referendum. He told a packed and noisy Commons: "We can no longer afford to pretend either that the euro does not exist or that Britain should not actively prepare for it. Such a denial of reality does not promote Britain's interests, it betrays them."

The Prime Minister's statement exposed the continuing divisions in both the main parties over the euro, with leading Tory pro-Europeans such as

Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine ostentatiously sitting together as a group and warmly welcoming Mr Blair's words. But the Tory leadership and the large majority of Tory MPs will fight the euro up to and through the next election campaign. William Hague accused the Prime Minister of committing the country to an "unnecessary, expensive and time-consuming" course of action for which the voters had never given their consent.

"Hasn't it been a remarkably short journey from this love of the pound to the plan he announced today to adopt the euro and abolish the pound?" he said, referring to a 1997 article Mr Blair wrote in *The Sun* under the headline "My love for the pound".

Mr Blair made plain that, as before, there will be no Government decision on the euro this side of a general election. But the clear expectation is that if Labour wins again, that decision will come soon afterwards, possibly in late 2001 if the general election is called in the early summer of that year.

The timetable envisaged by the plan is for a four-month referendum campaign. If the British people vote for entry there would be between two years and 30 months of intense preparations for automatic cash machines and supermarket tills to be changed, ending with the introduction of euro notes and coins. After a further period of up to six months — but possibly as short as two months — sterling notes and coins would vanish.

The plan is silent, however, on the key date at which sterling would be locked into the euro — the effective date that Britain joins the single currency. It is likely to be within a year of the referendum decision but a lengthy, unresolved argument is proceeding between the Treasury, which wants a short period to avoid

Continued on page 2, col 5



The Swiss Army helps rescuers in Evolene yesterday after two avalanches hit the Swiss resort. About 40,000 people have been stranded by avalanches

Rescuers hunt for survivors after avalanche hits Austrian resort

By NIGEL GLASS, IN VIENNA
AND ELIZABETH JUDGE

A HUGE avalanche swept through an Austrian ski resort yesterday, killing at least seven people and burying up to 40 others beneath thousands of tons of snow.

Rescuers in the Tyrolean community of Galtür were frantically trying to reach the trapped as darkness fell. Several people were pulled out alive, suffering from serious injuries. Soldiers joined the hunt, but their efforts were hampered by poor weather, which prevented help being airlifted to the Pitztal Valley.

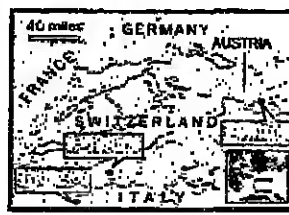
Witnesses said several snowfalls hit the town, which had been cut off for three days, al-

most simultaneously. Plumes of snow blocked out the sun and vibrations triggered falls in neighbouring resorts.

As the emergency services struggled to reach the scene, near the Swiss border, radio appeals for tourists with medical experience were broadcast. Soldiers with night-sights, heat-seeking equipment and sniffer dogs were confined to their barracks by the bad weather.

The area is popular with British holidaymakers. The Foreign Office was waiting for information about possible casualties and ski companies were organising head counts of their clients in the resort.

Chris Laming, communications director of P&O Stena



Line, who has been stranded in Galtür since Friday with his wife Pauline and two children, said: "The sky went black and a huge cloud of powder snow covered the whole village. I saw people running in and out of our hotel. Terrified parents were searching for their children."

Mr Laming, from Dover, said: "The incredible thing was that there was absolutely

no sound. All we saw was the light go and this swirling powder snow crash into the hotel windows."

He said the disaster happened as ski-instructors were organising a light-hearted race in a central area called the Dorfplatz. "The slopes are closed, but they were racing inside the village and the Dorfplatz was very crowded. The spot where the avalanche hit is covered with snow many feet deep and that's where they are digging and probing with poles."

Franz Wenko, a hotel operator, said: "We were drinking hot mulled wine, when suddenly it started. The lights went out. It was dark. There was only dust and snow. We got

out of there as fast as we could."

Other avalanches have killed at least 11 people throughout Europe and hundreds of Britons are among at least 40,000 people stranded in resorts experiencing their heaviest snowfalls in living memory.

British tour operators made arrangements to transfer clients who had been due to fly to Galtür next weekend to safer resorts. Last weekend, Ing-hams airlifted 12 holidaymakers away because of the risk of avalanche. Britons with relatives in the area can contact the following telephone number: 0043 512 5900 2500.

Snow chaos, page 4

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Visions vie with values

THIS will be a battle royal. Few can have watched yesterday's Commons clash over the euro without thrilling to a sense of political history.

And not just between parties. Watching the isolation of one bench of Tory Europeanists — the tension in their faces and voices — it was hard to believe their differences can be contained much longer.

The impromptu illuminated best. Though vastly significant, the Prime Minister's prepared text was dull and over-long. But William Hague's off-the-cuff response showed resoundingly the power with which the anti-euro cause can be projected: while Tony Blair's rejoinder was a wither-

POLITICAL SKETCH
Matthew Parris

ing demonstration of how Tory lip-service to an open mind on the euro will be blown away.

Mr Blair's Statement was peppered with provisos. Details of how "should it choose to do so, Britain could join" popped up in the first paragraph. "In principle", and "if" soon joined the chorus of conditionality.

But to study body language and intonation — head raised for every "when", voice lowered for each "if" — was to hear more of a precautionary, gabbled "God willing" than

the promise of an open mind. They resembled a legalistic "terms & conditions apply". Mr Blair might as well have winked.

Most of his Statement sounded like Whitehall-speak, with blank final page and a civil servant's note: "JPM to add thoughtful ending".

He did. To sound contemplative, Mr Blair reaches for his V-words: "vision" and "values". These are beginning to excite derision. "We have a vision, but it is a vision that is practical. We should have confidence both in our vision and our pragmatism."

This was met with hoots. I noticed again a keynote in Continued on page 2

Unilever makes £5bn payout

Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch consumer goods company, is to return a record £5 billion to its shareholders by way of a special dividend. The company said it had no use for the cash which amounts to 10 per cent of its stockmarket value. The payout amounts to 66.13p a share. Page 25.

Race favourite put down

Bint Allayl, the favourite for the 1,000 Guineas, has been put down after suffering a leg fracture on the gallops at Kingsdown, near Lambourne. She was rated Europe's champion two-year-old filly last season. Page 43

Lawrence family set to sue police force for damages

By MICHAEL HARVEY
AND STEWART TENDLER

THE family of Stephen Lawrence is expected to launch an unprecedented civil action for damages against the Metropolitan Police.

Doreen and Neville Lawrence and their legal advisers have discussed a claim for negligence after reading a damning report of the police investigation into their son's murder. The judicial inquiry report is to be released today.

The Lawrences also hope that the Crown Prosecution Service will use evidence gathered at the inquiry, headed by

Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, to bring charges of perjury against the five young men accused of the killing. Mr Lawrence said yesterday: "I'm still clinging to the hope of justice. When these guys gave evidence, they were lying and I am hoping that they are going to be tried for perjury. It carries a 15-year sentence. I'll be happy with that."

Last night Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, put the finishing touches to a ten-point plan to restore public confidence in his force. The project, which will combine a hearts and

minds campaign, is to be announced later today.

The proposals, described as radical, is expected to include plans for officers to wear name tags on duty so that they can be identified. The Yard is also launching training for all senior officers so that they can evaluate murder cases.

A civil action by the Lawrences could see individual officers, many of whom are criticised heavily in the inquiry report, being sued, or Sir Paul Condon as head of the force or both. A family friend said: "No final decision has been taken."

Lewisham murder, page 5

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Scientists develop test to identify meningitis in minutes

Early treatment of killer disease will save lives and prevent epidemics, Ian Murray reports

A SIMPLE test that can diagnose meningitis within 30 minutes at a cost of just £2 has been developed by British scientists.

The discovery represents a breakthrough in tackling the killer disease as early treatment is vital to save lives and prevent epidemics. The test shows not only if a patient is suffering from the disease but also which of the three main strains.

Vaccine is effective against only the C strain, which occurs in 25 per cent of cases. Since it takes several

days for a vaccine to be effective, the earlier contacts of the sick person are immunised the better the chance of preventing an epidemic.

In the recent outbreak at Pontypridd in South Wales it took three days to establish that group C was involved before starting the vaccination programme. With the new test it would be possible to start immunising people almost immediately.

Julia Warren, of the Meningitis Research Foundation, said: "This will revolutionise diagnosis worldwide and is tremendously exciting. It has enormous public health consequences."

The foundation paid £85,000 to fund the research. "This is a wonderful value for money," she said.

The new method, developed by scientists at Cardiff University and

the University of Wales College of Medicine, uses equipment that can be bought for only £1,000 and costs £2 per test.

A blood sample is put through an ultrasound scanner enhanced to provide an image that can be easily read. This shows if a meningococcal disease is present and identifies which of the three main strains is involved. Because patients suffering

from suspected meningitis are immediately given antibiotics, it is almost impossible to grow a culture that will show what strain of the disease has caused the illness.

Accurate diagnosis has therefore been possible only by sending a lumbar puncture sample to a laboratory in Manchester where the DNA eventually shows what the patient has been suffering. Trials at

five hospitals in Britain and Ireland have shown that the new test is superior to traditional culture techniques and as effective as DNA tests even though it takes only a fraction of the time and can be performed by staff after very little training.

Edward Kaczmarek, head of the Public Health Laboratory Service's meningococcal reference unit in

Manchester, said: "Knowing what strain of meningitis we are dealing with is important in the management of contacts and the identification of outbreaks."

Details of the way the new test works are shown on *Tomorrow's World* on BBC1 tonight. Philip Monk, a public health consultant, told the programme that the ability to make an early diagnosis would allow an early intervention in an outbreak of the disease and would therefore save lives.

MP quits over leak of report to Cook

By ROLAND WATSON, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE arms-to-Africa affair dealt another blow to Robin Cook yesterday when a Labour MP resigned from the inquiry committee after admitting he had leaked a copy of its findings to the Foreign Secretary.

Ernie Ross, MP for Dundee West, sent a draft copy of the cross-party Foreign Affairs Select Committee findings to Mr Cook four weeks before it was officially published.

Mr Ross admitted his role as Mr Cook was forced to concede in a Commons written reply that he had received a leaked copy of the report, one of the most hard-hitting and critical of a department in recent memory.

Tories on the committee had previously complained that Mr Cook appeared remarkably well briefed on the contents of the report in broadcast interviews before it was published.

Although a severe embarrassment to the Foreign Secretary, the Opposition turned their fire on one of his middle-ranking ministers, Tony Lloyd, whom they accused of misleading the Commons.

When asked last week who was the first person in the Foreign Office to see the report, Mr Lloyd side-stepped the question and answered in a written Commons reply that copies were collected on publication day. Cheryl Gillan,

Tory foreign affairs spokeswoman, said that if Mr Lloyd had been aware of the leak, he should resign.

Paul Tyler, the Liberal Democrat spokesman, said the "clear effect" of Mr Lloyd's reply had been "to mislead Parliament". He said Mr Lloyd should come to the Commons to give an immediate explanation.

Mr Ross's admission that he had acted against one of the foundations of the select committee system, that it exists to call the executive to account, failed to surprise some of his own colleagues.

During the protracted committee sessions into the Sierra Leone affair, Mr Ross was often an obstructive force to the questioning of ministers and civil servants, and once even adjourned a hearing because of the line of inquiry taken by one of the committee members.

Dennis Canavan, Labour MP for Falkirk West, said: "Ernie has at last been exposed as a Government lackey. He has abdicated his responsibilities as a parliamentarian."

Mr Canavan said the episode also raised questions for Mr Cook. "Robin should have refused to accept it. He is a parliamentarian as well as a Minister."

In his statement, Mr Ross admitted he had breached the confidence of the committee, but had done so because of his concerns about the way the committee's approach.

He said: "I accept without reservation that I was wrong to do this and consequently it was right for me to resign from the committee."

"I express my sincere apologies to the committee and was very grateful for the understanding shown to me by all of them."

A Foreign Office spokesman said that after receiving the leak, the department had neither tried to interfere with the committee nor done its own leaking to the media.



Ross sent copy of draft report to Robin Cook



Fiona Jones, MP for Newark, arriving at Nottingham Crown Court yesterday

Candidate and agent 'went on spending spree'

By ADAM FRESKO

A LABOUR MP failed to declare part of her election expenses to run a campaign that helped her win a seat from the Tories at the general election, a court was told yesterday.

Fiona Jones, 41, the Labour MP for Newark, broke election law by spending double the permitted amount, Nottingham Crown Court was told. Mrs Jones and her agent, Des Whitcher, both deny making a false declaration of election expenses in June 1997, contrary to the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Paul Mann, for the prosecution, told the court that after every general election an MP and the agent had to declare what their election expenses amounted to. "There is a legal limit as to how much money a candidate can spend," he said. The limit for Newark was £8,905. Mrs Jones and Mr Whitcher declared £8,514.

"They also declared that was the amount of money they had received in donations to fund that campaign. The allegation is the defendants received and spent more than twice that amount and in declaring £8,514 they deliberately lied," Mr Mann said.

He added: "We will suggest it must have been apparent to these defendants from the outset of this campaign it was going to be a costlier one than in the past."

The party opened up a bank account and Mr Whitcher became one of the signatories in October 1996. "When Mr Whitcher took over the account it had a little under £2,000. That would have been by no means enough to fight a campaign these two people had in mind."

They received a donation of just over £6,000 for the campaign. "Mrs Jones and Mr Whitcher were then able to begin spending in earnest." In January 1997 Mrs Jones hired a Toyota until after the election. "She had a car of her own," said Mr Mann, "as did her husband. We suggest the acquisition of this rather smart red vehicle was all to do with image." The court heard that the expenses for the car were incorrectly entered.

After they had hired an office, equipped it and hired three telephonists, there was less than £2,000 in the account, Mr Mann said. "It was within a matter of a few weeks of polling day. In that month, beautifully timed, a company provided a further £10,000. According to one prosecution witness, Mr Whitcher confided in her that his policy was to 'spend, spend, spend'. The trial continues."

Visions and values Blair push for euro

Continued from page 1

this Prime Minister's approach to persuasion. The word "real" kept cropping up. We must get real. The euro is happening — like it or not. There is no opposing reality, "no going back" (in his words) "from the road to the future." The euro simply is.

This inevitable view of history sounds bold but is secretly timid, side-stepping questions of what is wise or right. "Get into what is the real world today?" Blair snapped at the Tory Eurosceptic, Sir Michael Spicer.

But on the attack Blair was formidable. Answering William Hague, he derided the ten-year limit on the Tory "no" to the euro. Was the Tory position (asked Blair) to offer a ten-year guarantee on "a thousand years of history?"

Just as Blair's "if" came with a wink, so had Hague's "not for the next ten years". Blair meant "soon" and Hague meant "never". Each was easily mocked for this.

The Tory leader had a fine old time deriding the Prime Minister for his protestations of even-handedness, and warning the House of his real purpose. Hague's jokes were as good as ever, but beneath lay the force of conviction and a lucid argument. Three quarters of the Tory ranks rallied with relief to this performance, and said as much in their interventions.

But a handful hated it. Sir Edward Heath was utterly dismissive. Kenneth Clarke cheerfully ignored it. Ian Taylor sounded close to snapping and Michael Heseltine sounded sad. When Sir Archie Hamilton, the chairman of the Tory backbench 1922 Committee, offered his colleagues a Majorite middle position ("too early to judge") around which they could unite, the Europeanists looked uninterested.

They do judge: the Eurosceptics judge too: the wish to pretend otherwise is ebbing. Yesterday the tide looked irreversible.

Continued from page 1

political uncertainty, and the banks and business, which want a longer time to prepare.

Treasury officials said the Government would attempt to demonstrate that it had achieved economic stability in the run-up to euro entry. They denied that this would amount to "shadowing the euro".

Mr Blair was backed by Paddy Ashdown who said the Government had "crossed the Rubicon" and urged ministers openly to make the case for the single currency. With other Tory MPs glowing beside them, Mr Heseltine, Mr Clarke and Sir Edward Heath rowed in behind the Government.

But there was also dissent from veteran Labour Eurosceptics with Dennis Skinner warning against experiments with "genetically-modified currencies" and Tony Benn demanding a free vote for Labour MPs and the Cabinet.

Mr Blair retorted by mocking the unlikely "Thatcher-Portillo-Benn axis" opposed to the single currency. He added that once the decision to join the single currency had been taken, Britain could move to membership "considerably faster" than the 11 original euro-zone members. He also stressed the importance of the five economic tests the Government had set for membership being satisfied.

All businesses would need to adapt their systems to the new currency. Smaller businesses could use "off the shelf" systems, but larger firms would face "more intricate challenges".

The CBI welcomed the changeover plans but called for a clearer commitment to joining. Other business chiefs raised the issue of economic convergence, calling for a clearer signal on how the Government would get the economics right for Britain to sign up for the euro.

But Ruth Lea, head of policy at the Institute of Directors, criticised the government and said many smaller firms would face huge costs, with no return if they did not deal with Europe.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Carey plan to boycott the Dome

The Archbishop of Canterbury is to lead a boycott of the Millennium Dome celebrations if Christianity is sidelined on New Year's Eve.

Dr George Carey, in an interview in tomorrow's *Catholic Herald*, said that he would prefer to go to church if there was to be no Christian component in the celebrations, and that Cardinal Basil Hume, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, would also boycott the Millennium Dome ceremony.

"If we are invited, and if there is going to be a significant moment of silence, saying the Lord's Prayer together, perhaps one or two other prayers, it will be worthwhile doing that. If we cannot be guaranteed that, we will be in our churches," Dr Carey said. "It will be a wonderful, glorious but essentially factious ceremony and anniversary unless it is connected with the birth of Jesus Christ."

Work is skin-deep

Long-term unemployed will receive funds to have visible tattoos removed to make it easier for them to get a job, in a trial scheme in Coventry. They may also get new haircuts, suits, and counselling for drink or drug problems to help to present a better image. The £2 million scheme for the over-25s aims to get 700 into work in 18 months.

Teaching 'craft'

Teaching is a craft not a profession, the Chief Inspector of Schools said. Chris Woodhead denied the term was critical. "My aim is to rescue teachers from the culture of deference which has for too long emasculated professional confidence. Good teaching is more than that a complex of technocratic competencies," he said in the annual Ofsted lecture.

Anti-fur Bill

A Private Member's Bill to end fur farming in Britain was unveiled yesterday by Maria Eagle, Labour MP for Liverpool Garston. It has cross-party support and the backing of animal welfare groups. The Bill aims to outlaw the "cruel and barbaric" farming of animals for fur and compensate producers for the loss of their livelihoods.

Joint force plan

RAF Harriers are to be combined with the Royal Navy's Sea Harriers as a single training and command organisation, the Defence Secretary said. Giving details of the plan, called Joint Force 2000, George Robertson said that air crews from the Navy and RAF would retain their uniforms and preserve their "single Service ethos".

Jog the memory

Mice that go running on an exercise wheel whenever they want create more cells in the hippocampus, the area of the brain involved in learning and memory, say scientists at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California. It is not known if this works for humans, but more people from the institute have taken up jogging.

Irvine defends reforms

Legal profession given warning at Times Law Awards

THE Lord Chancellor last night dismissed concerns that he was rushing the legal profession into radical civil justice reforms, which take effect in April.

Lord Irvine of Lairg said that the draft rules for the changes, which bring in a quicker, cheaper system of civil justice, had been available since last July.

Judges will become trial managers, dictating the pace of litigation, setting strict timetables and imposing sanctions if litigants do not comply.

Some solicitors have expressed fears that they have

not had enough time to get to grips with the final rules, published earlier this month. But Lord Irvine said: "Prudent lawyers have been using them for several months now as a guide to what will be expected of them. They are ready for April's changes. We are on time and the whole profession must be on time too."

Lord Irvine was speaking at the presentation of *The Times* Law Awards, held with One Essex Court, the chambers of Anthony Grabner, QC.

The winning essay on the title "Access to Justice — Who pays the Price?" was by Mike

Thomas, a student at University College, Oxford. He received £3,000.

Second prize went to Sarah Patin, who is training to be a barrister at the Inns of Court School of Law after taking a history degree at Oxford; and the third prize went to Susana Sava, a Romanian student studying law at the London School of Economics. A special prize went to Rachael Levene, a 17-year-old schoolgirl from Nottingham.

Full details of the prizewinners and the winning essay will be published in *The Times* law pages next Tuesday.

Millennium sign of The Times

By MARK HENDERSON



Headline news: the Millennium sculpture

THE TIMES is to be the official millennium sponsor of the Prime Meridian line at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich. The line of 0 degrees longitude — from which every clock in the world is set — will be marked by an electronic news feed that allows visitors to stand on the meridian and read up-to-the-minute headlines from *The Times* website. The screen will also show facts about time.

At the end of the line will stand a 2.6 metre Times Millennium Sculpture, a striking steel structure with a form that echoes the astronomical

timepieces housed in the Royal Observatory. The sculpture, designed by the architect Cristina Garcia for £1, is a twin to the Times Millennium Sculpture unveiled last year on London's Cromwell Road.

Greenwich has been recognised worldwide as the home of time since 1884, when the International Meridian Conference fixed the precise position of longitude 0. Dr Kristen Lippincott, director of the Royal Observatory, said: "We are delighted to welcome *The Times* to the Greenwich Meridian 2000 project. *The Times* sponsorship of the Meridian Line and the electronic news feed along the line at the Observa-

tory reflect the crucial international importance of the Prime Meridian. The Meridian Line and *The Times* Millennium Sculpture will be focal points for the forthcoming millennium celebrations."

Planning permission for the project was granted until 2003 by Greenwich Council last week, and it will be formally launched in the spring. Building work, expected to last five weeks, will begin as soon as ancient monuments permission is obtained from the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott. Structural engineers are Atelier One and project management will be by Crowe and Nicholas.

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Lottery funds granted for memorial to 'forgotten' soldiers from around world who fought for Britain

Gates to honour colonial war dead

By DOMINIC KENNEDY

THE courage of millions of soldiers from India, Africa and the Caribbean who volunteered to fight for the British Empire will be saluted with commemorative gates to be erected beside Buckingham Palace.

The Memorial Gates on Constitution Hill, part-funded by £900,000 from the National Lottery, will be the most prominent symbol yet of co-operation between Britain and people from the former colonies in two world wars.

The curry millionaire Ghulam Noon and the steel billionaire Lakshmi Mittal are among the most influential Asians in Britain forming the driving force of the Memorial Gates Trust.

The gates were the idea of Baroness Flather, the first Asian woman peer, whose father served in the First World War in Mesopotamia, where 29,555 of 31,800 deaths were Indian.

Baroness Flather said: "Somebody once asked me 'Does Remembrance Sunday mean anything to you?' I didn't know what to do with that person, but then I realised that so many of our people were there."

Her father, Afrah Rai, a student in Dublin in 1914, volunteered to serve as a medical orderly after Mahatma Gandhi said Indians could help the war effort but must not fight. During the Second World War, Mr Rai's canteen factory in India made bayonets.

The gates will be sited at the

top of Constitution Hill, near Hyde Park Corner, a spot which has to be cordoned off frequently with bollards. Constitution Hill was originally planted with a parade of trees for William III, who rode from Kensington Palace daily to the court at St James. It is named after the King's "constitution". Today the route is used twice daily by guardsmen, riding from Knightsbridge Barracks to Buckingham Palace and Whitehall.

A competition is being launched to design and build what will be the most prestigious metalwork commission since the 1993 opening of the Hyde Park gates dedicated to

'People in Britain just don't realise that so many of our people were in the wars'

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. There will be three pairs of gates spanning just over 50ft. They must be low enough to act as a frame for Wellington Arch.

Near by, a new crossing will allow pedestrians and riders to get from Green Park to Hyde Park Corner. The design will probably feature peacocks, which symbolise honour in South Asia, as well as African and Caribbean motifs.

For Baroness Flather, who was ennobled by Margaret Thatcher in 1990 but left the Conservatives over Viscount Cranborne's sacking, the project is a personal triumph. She had to persuade the Mil-

lennium Commission to back her idea, which was competing against other ethnic minority proposals for the last tranche of lottery money being spent to mark 2000.

There was hostility from some of the ethnic minority press. *India Weekly* wrote: "One argument — some may call it the most persuasive — for the abolition of the House of Lords is Baroness Shreela Flather."

At first the High Commissions of India and Pakistan were ambivalent, believing that the wars had been fought for Britain. However, she has assembled as patrons the High Commissioners of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Jamaica and Uganda, as well as Chief Emeke Anyaoku, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

The trustees include Viscount Slim, whose father Field Marshal William Slim, commander of the 14th Army, believed his Indian divisions were among the world's best.

Baroness Flather is launching an appeal to raise £900,000 to match the Millennium Commission's donation. Events will include dinners in the Tower of London and Banqueting House and a September *mela* or Indian fete in Hyde Park.

Kitchen lesson for bride of Amin

By ADAM SHERWIN

THE ex-wife of Idi Amin, the deposed Ugandan dictator, narrowly escaped jail yesterday when she admitted allowing her London restaurant to become infested with cockroaches and mice.

Sarah Kyolaba Amin, 42, was known as Suicide Sarah when she caught the tyrant's eye as a teenage go-go dancer with the Revolutionary Suicide Mechanised Regiment band. They parted in 1982. Yesterday she was said to have learnt inadequate kitchen lore from her mother when she went into business as a restaurateur in 1997.

She cooked surrounded by vermin, filth and grease at the "S" restaurant in Forest Gate, East London. There was no soap, towels, hot water or ventilation. An environmental health officer was so horrified that the dilapidated premises were promptly closed. Sharnbrook Crown Court was told.

Amin admitted seven breaches of food hygiene standards. Judge Dave Pilley said this could normally command a prison sentence but the fact she had no previous convictions, had pleaded guilty and had "drastically" improved conditions at the premises which have reopened, meant he could take an "exceptionally lenient" course. She was given a conditional discharge and told to pay £1,000 costs.

Drug overdose blamed for death of girl, 13

By A CORRESPONDENT

A GIRL aged 13 has died from a suspected drugs overdose, it emerged yesterday.

Leah Lawson's mother found her daughter's body on the sofa of their Grimsby home on Saturday afternoon. Police were called and a Home Office pathologist carried out a post-mortem examination. An inquest will open after the results of toxicology tests are known. Leah is believed to have used drugs including heroin in the past and had already suffered overdoses.

Her mother yesterday condemned drug dealers who had blighted the Nunthorpe estate and said her "happy-go-lucky" daughter who had been drawn into a wrong crowd. "She had everything to live for. How the drug dealers can do this I don't know," Jean Lawson told a local newspaper.

She said she had returned to her home on Saturday to find the girl slumped on the sofa. At first she thought Leah was asleep and wearing white lipstick but soon realised that she was dead.

The tragedy was the culmination in a downward spiral which started when Leah had become involved in "a bad crowd", she said.

Leah dabbled in drugs and moved on to heroin, before trying for the first time the mixture of methadone, Valium and nitrazepam that is feared

to have claimed her life. Mrs Lawson said: "She's taken three overdoses already. It was 50-50 with one overdose."

Relatives said Mrs Lawson, who has another daughter aged 27, had contacted social services and a local drug support charity to try to get help. A spokeswoman for North-east Lincolnshire County Council's social services department confirmed that the family had been in contact shortly before her death.

Anti-drugs campaigners were quick to highlight the growing cases of teenage drug abuse. Paul Bens, whose daughter Leah died from taking Ecstasy in 1995, urged the Government to offer more support for young people and their parents.



Leah Lawson: three previous overdoses

Beeton letters fetch £18,400

By ROBIN YOUNG

LETTERS penned by Mrs Beeton revealing that the Victorians' Delia Smith loathed dinner parties fetched £18,400 at auction yesterday.

The love letters sent by the then Isabella Mayson to Samuel Orchard Beeton shortly before their wedding in 1856, were snapped up by an anonymous buyer at Bonhams in London.

On one of the 16 letters — which were signed "Your affectionate Fatty" and "Yours pour toujours" — the celebrat-

ed author of the 1861 *Book of Household Management* writes: "Much to my annoyance I have discovered this morning that I was invited to Mr White's tomorrow evening, so shall have to go through that terrible ordeal, a dinner party. I do so hate it; a good dance somewhere is much more in my line."

Writing from her family home in Epsom, Surrey, she implores Sam to attend an impending dinner party with her, writing: "I do hope you

will not disappoint me because you know very well these formal feasts I abominate... Pray do not leave me to sit there or four hours with some old man I care not a straw about."

In another letter, she chides her husband-to-be for neglecting to visit her for 10 days. David Park, Bonhams' manuscripts specialist, said that the letters "shed a surprising new light on a woman who was the Delia Smith of her day".



How the gates may look: the memorial trust has launched a competition to design three pairs of gates on Constitution Hill. They are likely to feature Asian, African and Caribbean motifs



Khudadad Khan: first Indian holder of VC

The 'improvident' call to arms

"IT IS nothing short of a miracle which has called men from the uttermost ends of the Earth, some riding 20 days, which has caused human beings to do the most incalculable, improvident, and, from a narrow point of view, profitless things."

Thus Winston Churchill described to the House of Commons the Empire's response to the call to arms.

In the First World War, 1,440,500 Indians volunteered for military service for the "mother country". In the Punjab, 500,000 men out of a population of 20 million joined up, and in Nepal, whose Gurkha regiment was an important part of the Indian Army, 73,000 out of three million volunteered. A total of 47,000

Indians were killed and 65,000 wounded. The first Indian to be awarded the Victoria Cross was Sepoy Khudadad Khan who in 1914, as the only survivor of a machine-gun team, went on fighting against overwhelming odds at Ypres. Another 11 Indians won Victoria Crosses. Britain recruited 30,000 Africans into the King's African Rifles, as well as Indians, plus carriers, for the long East African campaign. Among Africans, at least 2,900 soldiers and 39,000 carriers died. More than 15,000 men of the British West Indies Regiment saw action in France, Palestine, Egypt and Italy, and more than 2,000 of them were killed. By the end of the Second World War,

there were 2.5 million people in the Indian Army. The Gurkhas lost 7,000 of their 120,000 men, because they served disproportionately as front-line troops.

The Indian Army took part in some of the toughest fighting in Burma, North Africa and Italy, and captured Monte Cassino. Of the 27 Victoria Crosses awarded during the Burma Campaign, 20 went to members of the Indian armed forces.

Almost 6,000 West Indians served in the RAF, including 300 as aircrew. Some trained first with the Royal Canadian Air Force. A total of 103 were decorated.

More than 375,000 Africans fought in the Second World War in the Middle East, East Africa, Italy and the Far East.

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Snow chaos leaves 40,000 stranded

Adrian Lee and Adam Sage in Paris report on how holiday dreams are turning into nightmares as avalanches threaten key resorts

HUNDREDS of British holidaymakers were stranded yesterday as the worst snowfalls in living memory caused chaos in resorts throughout Europe. It was estimated that at least 40,000 people were cut off by heavy snow or the risk of avalanche.

A group of more than 50 British holidaymakers have been stranded in the Austrian resort of Lech since Saturday, unable to catch flights home.

Among them was Kenneth McKenzie, a solicitor from Chiswick, west London, his wife, Jane, their three children and a schoolfriend.

Snow has been falling constantly since the middle of last week making escape from the region impossible.

According to Mr McKenzie, who was scheduled to fly home last weekend, there is a waiting list of more than 1,000 for private flights out.

"The worst thing is the lack of information," he said. "It could be two days or five days before we get out. We are hemorrhaging money — there is no novelty to it at all and people are frankly fed up."

He has been faxed work by his office and homework for his children, who are pupils at St Paul's in Hammersmith.

According to the authorities in Austria, the stress of being trapped is beginning to cause "psychological tension" in some resorts.

"I have not seen any list flights yet," said Mr McKenzie. "But it is pretty fraught at the tourist office where people are trying to get information."

With only two ski lifts out of more than 30 open, there is little opportunity to ski, he said.

The family is ready to leave at a moment's notice, and is prepared to leave luggage behind if it means getting home.

Helicopters flying injured people out for hospitalisation were yesterday bringing in food and tons of mail, which was piling up because entire valleys were cut off.

Other Britons are stranded in Ischgl, in the Tyrol, and Grindelwald, in the Swiss

Alps, where supplies of fresh food have run out and diesel is being rationed.

It is feared that a massive wall of snow above Grindelwald could be dislodged at any time. Small convoys of lorries, their drivers carrying transmitters in case they are buried, were being allowed to enter the village at dawn, when the risk was at its lowest.

One British company, Powderbyrne, has hired helicopters to airlift 120 clients out of Grindelwald.

Thousands of people are stranded in other Swiss resorts and helicopters were being used to fly British tourists into St Moritz to begin holidays.

In the Chamonix area in France most runs were closed and some holidaymakers were returning home complaining that they had been unable to ski for the majority of their stays.

"It is a complete nightmare," said Natasha Wright, a representative with Ski Weekend, which was using vans to take clients to other resorts where conditions were better. There they faced queues of more than two hours for lifts.

In Holland, the Government has advised people not to take skiing holidays.

"There hasn't been this much snow in 50 years," said Bas Kuik, a spokesman for the Dutch tourist board. It would be the first time the board had advised people to keep away from Austria, Switzerland and France, he said.

But British companies said they had no plans to suspend operations. Many were frantically switching clients away from the worst hit resorts.

A spokesman for the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) said that only a handful of people had cancelled holidays because of the increased avalanche risk.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office warned Britons to ensure that they had adequate insurance cover and to be aware of the risks of skiing off piste.

The Ski Club of Great Brit-



Workers shovel snow from a roof in Klosters yesterday. Unusually heavy snowfalls in the Alps have triggered catastrophic avalanches and left many villages cut off

ain said that improved equipment for skiing and snowboarding was encouraging inexperienced people to be over adventurous.

Skiis with wider ends and tips, and snowboards, have enabled relative novices to become reasonably accomplished more quickly than in the past and tempted them to seek the thrill of powder skiing off piste before they have sufficient experience.

It also suggested that skiers carry transmitters where there

was a possibility of avalanche and not to rely on mobile telephones to call for help.

In Chamonix French ski guides said that they knew that a large part of their clientele was drawn to the area by the promise of off-piste skiing and snowboarding and would go elsewhere if this was banned permanently.

Also, the 130,000 people employed by French ski resorts create a lobby group in favour of keeping the slopes open that is difficult for the French Government or local politicians to resist.

Thousands of people, most of them tourists, are stranded at the ski resorts of Klosters and Davos in eastern Switzerland where the maximum avalanche alert is in effect, local authorities said yesterday.

Road and rail access to the Swiss resorts has been blocked and the ski stations cut off with 26 roads impassable in the canton of Grisons.

Transport by helicopter has not been possible due to bad weather conditions.

In the Evolène region in the southern Swiss canton of Valais, dual avalanches on Sun-

day night are feared to have killed 10 people after destroying nine chalets.

The bodies of two men in their twenties were found in a car, but eight others — including two French families — are still missing and the chances of finding them are increasingly slim, according to rescuers.

During Monday in the Valais, an avalanche reportedly hit every 20 minutes.

Along the swollen Rhine River, meanwhile, the first sand-

bags were being laid in Cologne as a precaution against flooding.

The water was still more than three feet below flood level but was rising, pushed by melting snow and rain from the Swiss headwaters. Shipping traffic was suspended on large stretches of the river.

The chaos extended into eastern Europe and Scandinavia as well.

Two Czech tourists were

missing and feared dead after they were caught in an avalanche on Sunday in Romania's Carpathian mountains, some 203 miles west of Bucharest.

Heavy snowfalls followed by rain had flooded thousands of acres of Romanian farmland and cut off northwestern villages, local media said last night.

The Independent Mediafax

the western border with Hungary flooded tens of villages and swamped hundreds of acres of land under various crops.

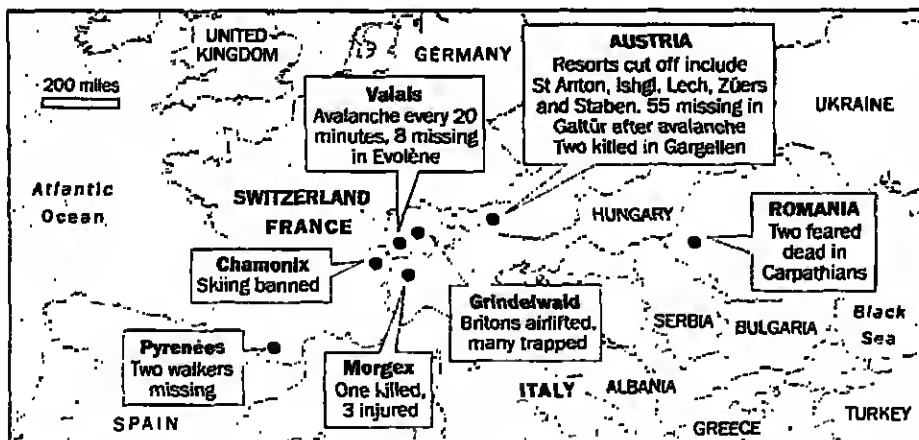
The Romanian Defence Ministry said that it had sent troops with rubber boats to evacuate villagers from a flooded area where soldiers were also helping the population to raise dikes on local rivers.

Meteorologists are predicting more rain and snow throughout the week.

In Finland rescuers called off search operations overnight, amid reports that an avalanche in the ski resort of Ylläs may not have claimed any victims after all.

On Monday reports had indicated eight people were missing. But investigations using heat-detecting cameras had found no sign of bodies, the STT/FNB news agency said yesterday.

In Hungary hundreds of families were evacuated after their homes collapsed due to snow melting after weeks of cold weather, while authorities in the east of the country are preparing for heavy flooding, officials said.



'We're fed up — there's a waiting list of more than 1,000 for private flights out of here'

A 42-year-old man is still missing, feared dead, in an avalanche that yesterday swept away a house in Britain in the central canton of Uri, from where some 300 people have been evacuated.

Rescuers and heavy equipment had to be ferried in by helicopter because of avalanche risks.

And one of the heaviest snowfalls of the century paralysed travel in western and

news agency said an avalanche had swept away the two Czechs, who had left their group to take a different route on the snowbound Muntale Mic mountain on Sunday.

Snowstorms over the past two days had prevented rescuers from searching for the bodies, it said.

Heavy snows cut off hundreds of villages on the northern border with Ukraine. Rains and a quick thaw on

Two Czech tourists were

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Heavy snows cut off hundreds of villages on the northern border with Ukraine. Rains and a quick thaw on

Courts try to curb off-piste thrill-seekers

Heavy falls and warm weather maximising the dangers, writes Adam Sage in Paris

WITH more than 20 people, including six Britons, killed in the French Alps alone since the start of the year, this holiday season is one of the deadliest on record.

Michel Daloz, a forecaster with the French weather office, Météo France, said "extreme conditions" were to blame.

"Usually we could expect about one metre of snow since the beginning of the season at an altitude of 2,000 metres (6,560ft) in the Alps. This year we have had three metres of snow. That only happens every decade or so."

"But we have also had high winds and spells of warm weather which have made the snow deeply unstable and provoked a maximum risk of avalanches. That is absolutely exceptional. And elsewhere in Europe it

has been even worse than in France."

M Daloz said conditions would improve slightly towards the end of this week and then deteriorate.

But the weather is only part of the explanation for the high death rate in the mountains across Europe. The growing popularity of skiing holidays is another.

The number of foreign holidaymakers who head for the French Alps has increased from 840,000 in 1987 to an estimated 1.6 million this year. Among them are more than 50,000 Britons. About 900,000 French tourists will stay in Alpine

resorts this winter. French police say the result is an inevitable increase in fatal accidents since "there is no such thing as a risk-free mountain".

However, the attraction of off-piste activities, notably snowboarding, has added to the death rate, since these pursuits often take holidaymakers on to slopes prone to avalanches.

One survey in France reported that up to 30 per cent of skiers and snowboarders were tempted to leave official pistes in pursuit of excitement and freedom.

The French authorities have tried to crack down, making it a criminal offence to wander off piste. Yet their

difficulties were illustrated on Monday by the weakness of the case against three Britons who told a French court that they stumbled by accident on to a slope that had been closed in Val d'Isère.

The holidaymakers face fines of Fr5,000 (£510) if found guilty of endangering the lives of their rescuers.

Elsewhere the authorities have tried to reduce risks by closing popular resorts. But with winter holidays generating Fr40 billion for the French economy there is pressure to keep open the pistes.

Joel Eckhardt, a town hall official in Prax de Lays in the French Alps, said that the Britons among the 5,000 tourists caught in his resort since Saturday had abandoned the slopes. "They are playing cards. I think they are having a very good

time and I think they will come back." French officials are caught between the conflicting demands of a powerful tourist industry and the acute need to impose safety on popular mountain slopes. It is a dilemma they have been unable to resolve.

Earlier this month, for instance, the prefecture of the Haute-Savoie in the French Alps took the unprecedented step of making it temporarily a criminal offence to go off piste.

But it had to back down as ski-lift operators and mountain guides in the town of Chamonix threatened to strike in protest.

Police in Chamonix say one way of reducing fatal accidents is for tourists to seek better information on the prevailing weather conditions. Too often, officers say, holidaymakers ignore safety warnings and the risks.



A tourist carries his daughter from a helicopter after being airlifted from an avalanche zone yesterday

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Black murder victim's family support police

BY STEPHEN FARRILL

TWO miles from the place where Stephen Lawrence died, a far more thorough investigation has begun into the suspicious death of another young black man.

Detectives have confirmed that they are treating as murder the death of Sheldon Bobb, a 21-year-old lifeguard, who was found dying from head injuries outside his house in Lewisham, southeast London. Within 40 minutes of the always being raised on Sunday afternoon, police had sealed off the scene and were conducting house-to-house inquiries. They have not ruled out a racial attack and say that they are keeping an "open mind" about possible motives.

Kerry Rumacre, 19, the mother of one of Mr Bobb's two children, said that she thought the



Sheldon Bobb: found dying outside his home

police were "doing a lot". "They are really trying this time," she said. "Sheldon had loads of black, white and Asian friends. He was just a nice, friendly person. We don't get racial attacks around here. Everyone gets on." Mr Bobb's

family yesterday joined Detective Chief Inspector Chris Horne, who is leading the investigation, at Shooters Hill police station, on the road where Stephen Lawrence was murdered.

Mr Bobb's mother, Glynis Brewster, 43, said: "Sheldon was a loving son and as a person he was very passionate about justice, so if anybody knows anything at all it is really important to be brave or concerned enough to share what you know so that he can have some justice for himself."

Mr Horne said that he believed the attack was carried out with a blunt instrument, but said that no weapon, witnesses or suspects had yet been found. He said that Mr Bobb was "popular", had no known enemies and no criminal record. Neighbours called an ambulance



Mr Bobb's sister, Sherry-Ann, and his mother, Glynis Brewster. "He was passionate about justice," Mrs Brewster said

upon finding Mr Bobb, and hospital staff contacted police after becoming suspicious about his head injury and body bruising. An autopsy found that he died from shock and bleeding, and that his injuries were not consistent with a fall or car accident. Mr Horne,

acutely aware of the timing of the inquiry, explained in detail police actions during the first days of the investigation and confirmed that he had spoken to Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Grieve, the racial task force and intelligence experts about trying to match the

attack to other crimes in the racially mixed area. He said that Mr Bobb was found at 2.45pm on Sunday, and that the hospital alerted police at 3.06pm. Police arrived at the scene about 3.23pm, sealed it off and began house-to-house inquiries,

which continued yesterday. There were 20 officers on the case, with "all the full facilities of any murder inquiry", he said. Asked if she was happy with the response, Mrs Brewster said: "It is early days."

Letters, page 21

No charges over death at private prison

BY RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

SEVEN officers at a privately run jail will not be prosecuted for manslaughter over the death of a black prisoner. The Crown Prosecution Service said last night there was no realistic prospect of a conviction.

Alton Manning, 33, a prisoner at Blakenhurst, near Redditch, died in 1995 after being put in a headlock during a struggle when officers removed him from his cell. Last year an inquest jury returned a unanimous verdict that he was unlawfully killed at the prison, run by United Kingdom Detention Services.

He was on remand accused of malicious wounding and illegal possession of a firearm. The seven officers were suspended after the inquest verdict and will remain away from duty until a Prison Service inquiry is completed.

Raji Blair, solicitor for Mr Manning's family, said that a formal complaint had been lodged with West Mercia police about the conduct of the investigation into the death.

Any minister guilty of leak will be sacked

BY ROLAND WATSON AND MICHAEL HARVEY

A minister found to be responsible for leaking the Stephen Lawrence report will be immediately sacked, Downing Street said yesterday. "The Prime Minister would not countenance a minister doing that," Mr Blair's official spokesman said.

Downing Street gave its warning less than 24 hours after Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, had refused to clear his ministerial team of involvement and failed to say if the culprit would be dismissed if unmasked.

David Omand, the Home Office Permanent Secretary, has begun his internal inquiry into the affair, which saw an injunction being served on *The Sunday Telegraph* on Saturday night, and then lifted on Sunday.

Kate Hoey, the junior Home Office minister with responsibilities for the Metropolitan Police, contacted Mr Omand's office yesterday to inform him that she had not seen a copy of the report.

Paul Boateng, the Minister of State at the Home Office, who, with a select band of senior civil servants in the department, did receive one of the few copies, yesterday avoided

the issue of the leak. At Euston station in London for the launch of a helpline for runaways, he was asked what he would be telling Mr Omand. He smiled and made no comment before leaving.

Mr Omand is also believed to have been told that Lord Williams of Mostyn, the other Minister of State in the Home Office, did not receive a copy.

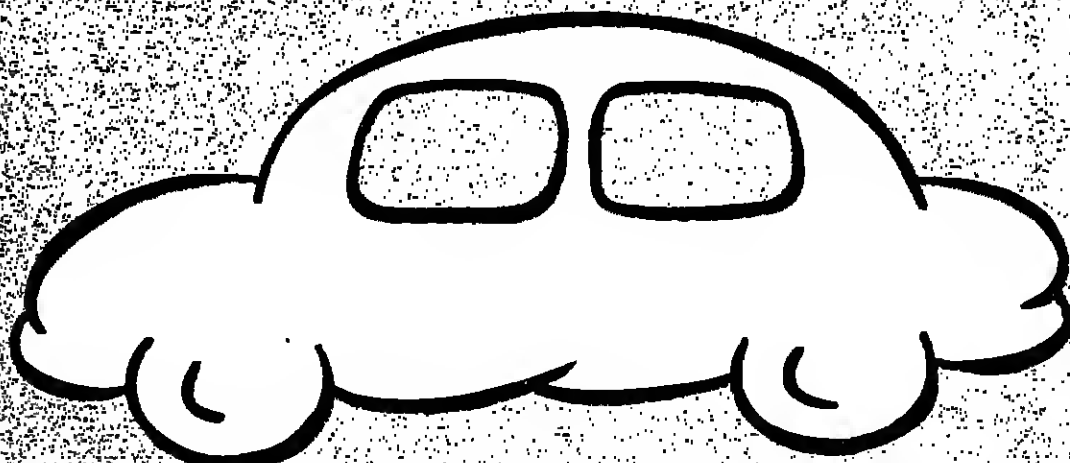
Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, said that the issues raised by the report, which is officially published today, are wide-ranging.

The report will accuse the Metropolitan Police of "institutional racism". Mr Ashdown said that racism was endemic in Britain, and not confined to institutions such as the police.

He said that it would be "a great mistake" if the report was seen as highlighting problems that were exclusively problems for the police. "Racism exists in every part of our society," he said in a speech to mark the Commission for Racial Equality's "leadership challenge".

"Stephen Lawrence died, at least in part, because we have not been sufficiently vigilant against racism."

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\$5,000 - \$24,999	Annually	4.40	4.40	3.90
\$250,000 or more	Monthly	5.27	5.40	4.79
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Daughter 'left sick mother on floor for week'

By SIMON DE BRUXELLES

A WOMAN who allegedly left her mother lying on the floor for a week after she collapsed yesterday pleaded not guilty in her manslaughter.

Benita Pearce, 33, was said to have made no attempt to get help for her housebound mother Isabella, 62, with whom she lived in St Austell, Cornwall.

Instead of calling a doctor, she covered her mother with a duvet and went to work as though nothing was amiss. Truro Crown Court was told. By the time she summoned medical help, her mother was in a state of shock and unconscious. She died two days after being admitted to hospital.

Roderick Denyer, QC, for the prosecution, said that Isabella Pearce had been forced to give up her job as a store detective because she had rheumatoid arthritis. After she became housebound her daughter took over most of the household chores and continued to work as a supermarket sales assistant.

Mr Denyer said: "On Monday, October 13, 1997, she found her mother lying on the floor in the sitting room. She



Pearce denies charge of manslaughter

did not pick her mother up and she certainly did not call for assistance. Benita Pearce carried on going to work and made little or no attempt to look after her mother when she got home, other than to give her an occasional drink of water.

"Her mother was incontinent but at no stage was she taken to the toilet or any effort made to clean her up. The Crown's case is that if her mother had been dealt with, whatever the reason for her being on the floor, she would not have died." Miss Pearce made

an appointment for Stephen Mather, her mother's GP, to make a house call but showed no sense of urgency. When he arrived the Monday after the fall he was shocked by the state of his patient.

He told the jury: "Mrs Pearce was deeply unconscious, propped up in the hallway. She was covered with a heavily soiled duvet and, in my judgment, was in immediate need of hospitalisation."

Mrs Pearce was taken to hospital at Truro and died two days later from blood poisoning caused by a perforated bowel.

After her arrest, Miss Pearce told police that she had thought her mother would get "fed up" with lying on the floor and get up of her own accord.

Detective Constable Steve Osborne said that Miss Pearce said in a taped interview: "She could be very awkward. She won't get ready on time when I am taking her out and sometimes she doesn't make it to the loo in the morning. At night she has started turning on all the lights. I was worried about her but she was insistent that she was OK."

The trial continues.



The Taylor family in 1991, with Nicholas third from left at the back. His parents said that he may have been seeking a thrill when he hanged himself

By HELEN JOHNSTONE

THE father of the Eton pupil who hanged himself in his college room had been held hostage by the Iraqis in Kuwait during the Gulf War, it emerged yesterday.

Malcolm Taylor, from Esher, Surrey, who ran an agricultural greenhouse business, was held captive when war broke out in 1991 after being captured while on a business trip. His son Nicholas, 15, who was a member of Bald-

wins Bec house, was found hanged in his bedroom on Monday after he failed to appear for breakfast.

Yesterday Mr Taylor rejected suggestions that his son had committed suicide, in-

stead suggesting that he may have been experimenting. Nicholas had been on an assisted place at Eton; his father's business declined as a result of his captivity.

In 1992, Mr Taylor's wife, Frances, told a newspaper of the family's anguish while he was held hostage. She said the children "became very quiet and developed nervous tics and things. We were under enormous pressure because we had no income at all."

Yesterday, Mr and Mrs Taylor caring for their three other children, appealed for information that would shed light on the death.

Mr Taylor rejected any suggestion that his son had been suicidal because of bullying at Eton. He added that Nicholas had been very close to his older brother, and had there been any suggestion of involvement with drugs, Jamie, who is 16, would have known about it. The parents told the London Evening Standard that they thought Nicholas might have

been experimenting with thrill-seeking of some kind. Mr Taylor said that Nicholas had been very happy and well-adjusted. Mrs Taylor had spoken to him on Sunday and he had been delighted to have been offered skiing holidays by two friends.

Mr Taylor disclosed, however, that Nicholas would worry when his father's work took him away from home. "He was a very sensitive, thoughtful kid. He would worry about when I went away on my travels for work. I was just back last week."

James Thompson, senior lecturer in psychology at University College London, and an expert in reactions to age-taking, said that being withdrawn and developing strange behaviour were understandable in a family when a loved-one had been taken hostage. If this persisted, specialist help was generally required. "If a child is coming up to GCSEs they could be under even more pressure. They could become very distressed," he said.

Family say Eton boy did not want to die

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Talk about feelings, suicidal men told

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Samaritans and GPs are to work together to try to curb the rapidly growing suicide rate among young men.

Suicide among men in their teens and twenties has risen by 80 per cent since the start of the 1980s and is second to road accidents as a cause of death in the age group.

In 1996, the last year for which there are full figures, there were 280 deaths from suicide among men in the 15 to 24 age group compared with five

from Aids, 24 from drug abuse and 173 from cancer.

The campaign aims to raise awareness of problems young men face and to encourage them to talk about their feelings. Posters will urge those with emotional problems to seek help from their doctors.

Simon Armon, chief executive of The Samaritans, said: "We must give young men the time and space they need to talk openly about despairing and suicidal feelings."

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I was stalked by secretary, says professor

ONE of Britain's leading criminal psychologists told a court yesterday how he suffered a campaign of harassment from his former secretary, who threatened to destroy his career. Professor David Canter, 55, said at Liverpool Crown Court that his tormentor made dozens of "frightening" telephone calls.

Over 18 months, Gillian Hartshorne, 50, made increasingly abusive calls accusing the academic of an adulterous affair with a young research assistant, he said. Mrs Hartshorne claimed she had been forced out of her job to make way for the woman, and made up to 20 telephone calls to Professor Canter's home each night angrily blaming him for being sacked, losing her home and having to have her car put down. She told him repeatedly he would be responsible when she killed herself.

Professor Canter, head of the Centre for Investigative Psychology at Liverpool University, said that the messages left on his answering machine were "very disturbing."

"I felt very distressed and,

Criminal expert tells court of 'frightening' calls and suicide threats, reports Russell Jenkins

on occasions, very fearful that she would follow through with the various threats that are contained within those calls," he said. "There are threats to take her own life. She seems to be implying she is going to get at me, attack me in some way."

Mrs Hartshorne, a divorcee of Great Sutton, Wirral, Merseyside, faces three charges of under the Protection from Harassment Act. She denies two charges of causing fear of violence to Professor Canter and a similar charge relating to Samantha Hodge, a research student.

John Philpotts, for the prosecution, said that Hartshorne

joined the university's psychology department in September 1996 as a secretary on a one-year contract, but blamed Professor Canter when she realised that the contract was not going to be renewed. She suspected that Miss Hodge was being groomed to take over her duties.

Mr Philpotts said: "Mrs Hartshorne began a campaign of harassment against Professor Canter ... There were threats to ruin his career and threats to destroy him."

Professor Canter, who pioneered the use of psychology in identifying criminals and has helped police with investigations, taped scores of the messages that Mrs Hartshorne left him between November 1996 and March last year. Mrs Hartshorne wept as they were played to the court. The trial continues.



Joan Cooper, marking her 106th birthday, and her lifelong friend Margaret Reed: they died within six days of each other



Friends 'died rather than leave home'

BY PETER GLEESON

TWO retired doctors lost the will to live after being told that the Red Cross residential home they had founded 50 years ago was to close, relatives said yesterday. Joan Cooper, 106, and Margaret Reed, 98, died within six days of each other after several weeks in which they are said to have refused to eat anything but toast and water.

The women spent £2,000 on legal fees trying to stop the closure of the

Meadowcroft Residential Home, near Cambridge, where they became residents 16 years ago. Dr Reed died in hospital on February 12, a few days after breaking her hip in a fall. Dr Cooper died six days later at Meadowcroft.

The Red Cross is closing the home at the end of next month because it cannot find enough residents and cannot meet health and safety rules. Dr Reed's niece, Jinx Nolan, said: "I don't think it's a coincidence that they died one month before the place was to

close. They gave up." A long-time friend of the doctors, Dr Elizabeth Shoenberg, said: "They undoubtedly willed themselves to die. Margaret said to me three weeks before she died that they were not going to move her. She said: 'I've always got a way out.'"

The doctors, neither of whom married, had been lifelong friends and pioneering GPs who specialised in treating women and children. In 1949, they helped to found the 14-room care home for the elderly under a 90-year

lease from Cambridge University. Sixty years ago, Dr Cooper was awarded a Red Cross medal for her work for the aged. Two elderly residents remain at Meadowcroft and they will be transferred when it closes.

Dorothy Quayle, director for the Red Cross, said the closure had been decided two years ago: "It was no longer financially viable but there are a lot of issues, including health and safety. I'm so sad it has come to this because both doctors had wonderful lives."



Mrs Hartshorne blamed Professor Canter for being sacked

Lady driver, 81, led police a dance

BY SUSIE STEINER

THE 81-year-old mother of Lord Huntingfield has been ordered to return to driving school after leading police officers on a 15-mile car chase.

The Dowager Lady Huntingfield remained oblivious to attempts to pull her over with strobe lights, indicators and a floodlight, a court was told. She repeatedly swerved across the A14 in Suffolk, thinking the police car was attempting to pass her on its way to an accident.

When the police pulled alongside and tried to direct her into a layby, she thought

that they were waving cheerfully at her. Finally the officers overtook and blocked her path.

Lady Huntingfield, of Cambridge, who is the widow of the 6th Baron of Huntingfield, admitted dangerous driving at Cambridge Magistrates' Court on Monday and was banned for 12 months. She was fined £56 and ordered to undergo an extended retest.

"I kept on trying to get out of the way," she said. "I suppose they think that I was mad as a coot."

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Local poll backs big council tax rise

By MARK HENDERSON

A LABOUR council is to raise council tax by more than twice the maximum recommended by the Government after winning the approval of voters in a local referendum.

Householders in Milton Keynes will pay 9.8 per cent more council tax next year after supporting the unitary authority's spending plans in a telephone and postal ballot. Almost 70 per cent voted for the 4.8 per cent rise or an even steeper rise of 15 per cent. Only 31 per cent supported a lower rise of 5 per cent.

The turnout of 44.7 per cent dwarfed the 26 per cent at the last local elections. The 66,647 who voted made the poll the largest local consultation in Britain.

Milton Keynes is one of a number of councils to ignore guidance from John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, that council tax should not rise by more than 4.5 per cent. Several Home Counties authorities are proposing double-figure increases, including neighbouring Buckinghamshire with 13.4 per cent.

Although Mr Prescott has said he will not flinch from punishing profligate councils, it would be difficult for him to cap Milton Keynes as the Prime Minister has said that

he sees local referendums as part of the future of local government. Councils seeking big tax rises ought to seek a direct mandate from their residents, Tony Blair wrote in a Fabian Society pamphlet last year.

Hilary Armstrong, Local Government Minister, said that the Government wanted to make it easier for councils to hold local referendums. "We intend to legislate to put powers to hold referendums on a firmer footing," she said.

Milton Keynes Council and the Electoral Reform Society, which ran the ballot, will be compiling a report and holding a Local Government Association seminar about the vote.

Kevin Wilson, the council leader, said: "We are proud of our innovation and the extent of the turnout. The people of Milton Keynes are used to innovation and they have delivered a clear verdict."

He said that Alan Meale, the Environment Minister, had "saluted" their plans and that the Government would be wrong to cap in defiance of voters' wishes.

The referendum proved that local voters were prepared to pay more to preserve key services, Mr Wilson said. Many council tax-payers had complained before the poll that the votes of those who did not pay, such as students and the unemployed, could force through a big increase but such fears proved wide of the mark.

While about 15 per cent of the residents, less than the national average, get a council tax rebate or pay nothing, 32 per cent of those eligible to vote supported large rises.

Opposition councillors said that the £70,000 spent on the referendum was a waste of money and had obtained a spurious mandate for a proposal that would otherwise have been voted through by councillors at no extra cost.



They're off: Jackie Ballard's constituents at Taunton racecourse deny her views on hunting but admit that she is a "rather good MP"

Outsider in the Lib Dem race could surprise the favourites

James Landale meets the blunt-speaking MP likely to be the only woman contender to succeed Paddy Ashdown

Jackie Ballard would appear from her curriculum vitae to embody all things Liberal Democrat. The MP for Taunton is a former lecturer, social worker, and council leader who studied psychology at the London School of Economics. She is pro-European Union and believes there should be a royal commission on drug abuse.

Whatever the image, the reality of this potential candidate to succeed Paddy Ashdown as party leader is more paradoxical.

Mrs Ballard, 46, opposes hunting with a passion, yet in 1997 took from the Tories a constituency stuffed with followers of the hounds. She was recruited to the Liberal Party in 1983 by Mr Ashdown himself, yet has vocally opposed her mentor on several issues. She is an egalitarian who nev-

ertheless backs positive discrimination to get more women into politics. She is on a diet — "three stone down, three to go" — and is a vegetarian who used to sit on the usually carnivorous Commons catering committee.

The common thread is a decisiveness and adherence to principle. As one colleague put it: "Jackie may look cuddly, but she has sharp edges." In her own typically blunt words, she has "balls".

At Taunton races the locals in their tweeds and trilbies privately derided her views on hunting but respected the courage of her convictions. "She is also rather a good MP," they admitted. Like all

the potential leadership candidates, Mrs Ballard has made no firm declaration of her intentions. Away in Mexico when Mr Ashdown announced that he was to retire in the summer, she was greeted on her return with calls to stand. "I was overwhelmed by the range of support," she says. She is giving the matter serious consideration.

Were she to stand, she insists, it would be no token gesture to gain women in the party more prominence, nor to put a marker down for the next leadership election. "I wouldn't stand for anything unless it was to win. I would stand because I had something to say: I wouldn't do it just to put up a good show."

"I have been underestimated in the past and people have lived to regret it."

On the central issue of whether Lib Dem co-operation with Labour should go beyond constitutional matters, her stance is simple: she opposes it. In November she was one of four on the party's federal executive to vote against co-operation should reach into other areas once the constitutional programme is complete: when

there is proportional representation at Westminster. "If we are too closely tied in with the Government on anything other than constitutional issues, we risk being less effective in opposing them and in getting our message across. I don't want people to be confused by the differences between the Liberal Democrats and Labour. I don't think we got elected round here by being wishy-washy or middle of the road."

Mrs Ballard, a party spokesman on local government, health and women's issues, has advantages over her rivals. She would be the only female candidate — in a field of otherwise rather grey men — to lead a party keen to see more women in its senior ranks. She is one of three female MPs in the party's 46-strong team.

As president of the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors, and a former town hall leader in Somerset, she is well known to the party's local government base. She is popular among the apparatchiks, topping the poll last autumn for the federal executive.

Last year she blocked Mr

Ashdown's plan to make it party policy that neighbourhood trusts should take control of schools from local authorities. She failed to persuade the party to support plans to ensure at least half of all constituencies had women on their candidate shortlists.

Mrs Ballard suggests that the type of leader the party needs now "is someone who will articulate the difference between us and Labour but also adopt a more collegiate leadership — less a one-man band". Were she leader, policy would not change, but there would be more emphasis on redistribution of wealth, fighting injustice and protecting the environment.

These have been Mrs Ballard's concerns since she was a girl. Born in Scotland to a woodcutter and a nurse, she was brought up in Wales, a scholarship girl among the more well-off pupils at a Monmouth boarding school, where she was a self-confessed troublemaker. The young Jacqueline Mackenzie's favourite book was Zola's *Germinal*: the vivid portrayal of poverty and injustice stays with her today.

Her marriage to Derek Ballard ended in 1989. Their daughter, 19, is a photography student. For relaxation, the MP listens to Celtic rock music and swims daily.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MPs urge speed cut on rural roads

Speed limits on country roads should be cut to 40mph to reduce the number of fatal accidents, MPs said yesterday.

Fifty MPs signed a Commons motion calling for an end to 60mph limits. Some campaigners are also pressing for 20mph zones in villages and the creation of "quiet lanes" on which cyclists, pedestrians and horse-riders would have priority over cars.

Of the 3,599 road deaths last year, 1,938 occurred on minor roads, almost all of which are in the countryside. Ministers are reviewing speed restrictions, but are nervous about imposing low speed limits in remote areas where effective enforcement would stretch police resources.

Midnight Monet

The Royal Academy of Arts will open overnight on Saturday, April 17, to cope with public demand on the last weekend of the *Monet in the 20th Century* exhibition. A record 210,000 visitors have already seen the show.

£17,000 jersey

The red jersey worn by Roger Hunt when he raised the World Cup in 1966 sold for £17,250. Hunt had swapped his England shirt with his West German opposite number, Gordon Mousinho, 44, who was at the final, bought the jersey at Sotheby's.

Runaway help

A free advice line has been set up for the 40,000 children who run away from home each year. The London-based service, run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, is open from 5pm to 11pm on 0800 096 0096. It is hoped that it will become nationwide.

Tourist record

A record 25.7 million foreign tourists visited Britain last year, spending £12.74 billion. The number from the US and Canada rose 12 per cent, compensating for a 1 per cent fall in those from the Continent, said the National Office of Statistics.

Laid to rest

A "silent" road surface costing £2.6 million is to be put on the M65 between Burnley and Huncoat, Lancashire, to protect owls. Conservationists said that owls hunted by listening to the movement of prey and traffic noise was driving them away.

Wild at art

A painting by an elephant fetched £500 at a Sotheby's auction. The work, described as abstract, was painted by an elephant at an animal hospital in Thailand after it was given a brush by a visiting artist. The proceeds will go to charity.



Wilson: said the vote delivered a clear verdict

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Staff at the British Library are fighting new rotas

Strike may shut British Library

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

BOOK delivery staff at the British Library have voted for a strike which would force the closure of its reading rooms, only 18 months after the much-delayed opening.

About 100 of the 120 staff who work in the storerooms of the £51 million building supported the strike plan, which is in protest at pay, a new rota system and working conditions which they say are unhealthy. The library will be closed from March 1 for at least a week unless an agreement is reached.

Staff say that the basement storerooms, four floors below ground, have health and safety problems: they have complained about noise, extremes of temperature, lack of natural light and ladders with missing steps which they have to climb to reach high shelves.

"There is also concern about people getting migraines," said one worker, who claimed that an internal health and safety report found 37 recommendations for improvement.

Staff are also unhappy with plans to reorganise their working hours, which will introduce a series of shifts and rotas so that not all are working

at the same time. The management wants to rotate staff between the building's levels so that they do not spend their entire day on the lowest floors. The changes would also allow the library to extend the reading rooms' opening hours, which are fewer than on the former site in Bloomsbury.

Workers say that 45 book delivery staff will lose £1,000 from their £13,900 salary because of the changes: 64 will remain at that rate.

John Sheldon, joint general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union, which represents 250,000 civil servants including the library's clerical and managerial staff, said: "The plans will damage the quality of services to library users and could put the collection at risk."

The library said that the pay of book delivery staff, who are not trained professional librarians, could rise with overtime to £15,500 and that more than half the staff would be upgraded to higher salaries.

Brian Lang, director of the British Library, said: "If we have no choice but to close. Our readers deserve better."

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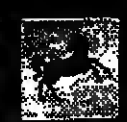
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Jeans left to rebels without a clue

BY ALEX O'CONNELL

JEANS, once the uniform of youth, are now a badge of middle-age — and the big shots at London Fashion Week show that among the truly fashionable, denim is dead.

As Levi Strauss announced plans to close half its US factories and lay off 6,000 workers because of a sales slump, the only jeans-wearers at the shows were overweight techies and forty-something men with bucking heads and bulging back pockets.

The trousers popularised in the 1950s by icons such as James Dean are now slipping down the backsides of the middle-aged. Karl Templer, a

female singer award at this year's Brits, said that "Levi's jackets are great", but that the legs of the jeans "are either too short or too long".

Stephen Marks, chairman of Group plc, which includes the French Connection label, squeezed into a pair of tight, dark-blue jeans, which he wore with a smart jacket to Farhi's show — but he admitted that he was no trendsetter.

"Combat trousers are getting stronger and stronger — we are selling more of these legs than ever, in stretch and with zips," Mr Marks said.

The All Saints singer Natalie Appleton said that her

hand preferred oversized trousers: "We like to feel comfortable and wear what we can dance and travel in."

Nicole Farhi (Appleton) and I spent our teenage years in the States and so we are both very influenced by American skate fashion." But Jeremy Clarkson, the

38-year-old Top Gear presenter, who might be considered an example of the sort of man who thinks that youth can be found in a pair of denims, said: "I will continue to wear them until I die because I'd look idiotic in combats."

"Jeans are for middle-aged people now and the job of the young is to rebel against their parents' fashions in the same way that I wore jeans because my father wore slacks."

Anna Wintour, the Editor of American Vogue, said: "Jean Paul Gaultier used denim with feathers in his collection this year. Jeans are not better or worse than other trousers. They are still a classic."

Nicole Farhi, whose collection was shown yesterday, has used fabrics such as wool sprinkled with flecks of iron and wood instead of denim. "We are pushing a softer look in sportswear this season. We have only one jean," said Farhi, whose sells them at £69.

Des'ree, winner of the best jeansmachine, page 19



Jeans abandoned in favour of "combats"



No nylon trousers here: a wearable look, with ideas and fabrics drawn from the past, was offered by the Paul Smith for Women collection, shown in a hotel



What ho! Style is so jolly English, after all

Lisa Armstrong reports on the traditional inspiration at London Fashion Week



TV's Wooster, Hugh Laurie, plus-fours and Argyle knits

FASHION may like to think of itself as international, but Englishness is rapidly emerging as a theme of London Fashion Week. Paul Smith, one of Britain's most successful designers, kicked off a packed day yesterday in the sedate surroundings of The Basil Street Hotel with clothes inspired by the likes of the Bloomsbury Set and Bertie Wooster.

Modish fashion editors are wearing nylon trousers and Prada sports-inspired footwear this season, but at Paul Smith the sporting choice was tweeds the colour of grouse, delicate chinosierie that wound its way round the hems, pockets and belts of silk tunic dresses, and slim-cut aubergine sheepskins layered over trouser suits.

Bertie Wooster was evident in the elongated Loden-coloured plus-fours

and Argyle knits that were reworked as dresses; the Bloomsbury Set was evident in the painted velvet that were inspired by the artist Sonia Delaunay. Smith, who made his name with men's clothes, is now finding his stride with womenswear: this was an appealing collection with plenty of wearable pieces.

Nicole Farhi also had plenty of desirable pieces, including sturdy looking leather boots and blonde sheepskins, which had been combed to look like Mongolian trim. Farhi, who is set to open a huge store in Manhattan later this spring, is slowly but surely carving

ing a bigger international profile for herself.

The Oscar-nominated actress Cate Blanchett was at the show in one of these blonde sheepskins, and enthused about the collection to all and sundry afterwards. Of course, it helps that she is currently rehearsing *Plenty*, the haunting play by Farhi's husband David Hare.

Deborah Milner, a graduate of the Royal College of Art, did not do wearables in her first catwalk collection yesterday. The silver dresses and skirts that twisted round the body, framing it with triangles that jutted out from

the hips like sharks' fins, were an academic exercise in technique — of which Milner, 34, has plenty. Using "strictly synthetic" fabrics and some bronze that she melted on her gas fire in Battersea, she painted an ethereal picture.

That she can do more, accessible pieces has been proved by the popularity of her made-to-measure wedding gowns, as worn by the likes of Annabel Heald. This was her chance to show her experimental side — and she ran with it.

"Is that open seam a styling tic or accidental?" asked one observer of a shark's fin dress. Vidal Sassoon, a sponsor of London Fashion Week, was less equivocal in his praise. "It's Frank Gehry for clothes," he said. Grey may come and go, but architecture never falls out of fashion.

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THE € DEBATE

Hague accuses 'foolish' Blair of ditching pound

BY JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE COMMONS

WILLIAM HAGUE accused Tony Blair of using the National Changeover Plan to bounce Britain into joining a single European currency as MPs debated the Prime Minister's statement.

The Tory leader said it was "a long list of clichés and verbiage" accompanied by little information. He mocked Mr Blair for an article "My love for the Pound" which he wrote for *The Sun* before the general election.

"Hasn't it been a remarkably short journey from this love of the pound to the plan you announced today to adopt the euro and abolish the pound?" he asked.

Mr Hague said: "While [Mr Blair] trumpets his love for the pound, it is his love for the euro which is the love that dare not speak its name."

He told the Prime Minister: "Isn't it the case that you have today committed the country to a course of action that is unnecessary, expensive and time-consuming, and for which the British voters have never given their consent?"

He added: "Isn't it foolish to embark on a changeover plan without the faintest idea how the necessary convergence of the economies is to be achieved?"

Mr Hague declared: "Instead of giving people the choice, your National Changeover Plan is part of a national handover plan, to hand over the economic and political freedoms of this country."

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, said the Government had "crossed the Rubicon". "I greatly welcome that, even though the Government has crossed the Rubicon by the thinnest millimetre, and even though the Government tries to pretend it has not

crossed the Rubicon." He insisted: "Unless the Government is prepared to come forward now and argue the case for the euro, then it risks this decision, the most important facing the UK, being lost by stealth. Now the Government is going to have to defend its own position — something it has not done before."

Kenneth Clarke, the former Tory Chancellor, told the Prime Minister: "I welcome the marked change of tone which today's statement represents. I particularly welcome the fact that you have reached agreement with the representatives of the majority of British business on the practical steps that are now to be taken to give some reality to your policy of 'prepare and decide'."

He added: "Would you undertake that you will from now on continue to put your mouth where you actually think our money ought to be?"

Giles Radice (Lab, Durham N), chairman of the Treasury Select Committee, urged: "The time has now come for a great national debate to inform the British people about the euro and the British Government must lead that debate."

Sir Edward Heath, the former Tory Prime Minister, told Mr Blair: "You have been absolutely right in everything

ed by one thing, economically throughout the world in its history. There is no single market in the world which has more than one currency and that is our position today — we cannot carry on successfully in a single market if we go for multiple currencies."

Tony Benn (Lab, Chesterfield), the former Cabinet Minister, asked Mr Blair: "Will you make clear that when the information published by the Government goes out, every elector is told that if Britain is a member of the single currency, they will lose the right to elect or to remove on polling day those who make the economic decisions that affect our lives?"

Michael Heseltine (C, Henley), the former Deputy Prime Minister, said the changeover plan would be "widely welcomed" and marked a "step forward in the Government's intention to join the single currency". He also urged Mr Blair to create and lead an all-party group pushing for entry to the euro.

Ian Taylor (C, Esher and Walton), a former Tory minister, also welcomed the plan and added: "Anyone who opposes the national changeover plan must in fact wish not to have a referendum because the referendum can only come if the British people have prepared."

Dennis Skinner (Lab, Bolton) spoke of the failures of Europe's common agricultural and fisheries policies and warned Mr Blair: "Beware of those carrying out experiments in genetically modified currencies."

John Taylor (UUP, Strangford) warned that the euro was politically driven and would lead to a United States of Europe. "The Prime Minister's statement could be the beginning of the end of the United Kingdom," he said.



Tony Blair announcing the details of the National Changeover Plan for joining the European single currency in the House of Commons yesterday

'Not a change of policy, but change of gear'

THIS is an edited version of the Prime Minister's statement to the Commons:

"On 21 October, 1997 the Chancellor of the Exchequer said he would publish details of how, should it choose to do so, Britain could join the euro. Today we publish an outline of the National Changeover Plan as a basis for consultation."

"The Chancellor said that in principle the Government was in favour of Britain joining a successful single currency. And he set out the conditions necessary to satisfy our national economic interest."

"It is conditional. It is not inevitable. Both intention and conditions are genuine. This is the right course for the country, to resolve this issue for the British national interest, the future of our people and their well-being. And it is that national interest that will always come first."

"I do not dismiss the constitutional or political issues. They are real. Monetary union is a big step of integration. But so was the Single European Act. And the EU itself."

"And if joining a single currency is good for British jobs and British industry, if it enhances British power and

BLAIR'S STATEMENT

British influence, I believe it is right for Britain to overcome these constitutional and political arguments and the fears behind them."

"For the very reason of the sensitivity of these arguments, we have also said clearly: the Government can recommend. But the people will decide in a referendum."

Mr Blair continued: "What we announce today, therefore, is not a change of policy. It is a change of gear."

"The euro is a reality. It exists. Eleven out of 15 other EU members are to it. It represents 20 per cent of world income, as big as the US. It will be the currency of 290 million people."

"Fifty per cent of our trade now is with the eurozone. The launch of the euro means already that an increasing number of UK firms are starting to use the euro, not just big business like British Steel or Ford or Philips or ICI and Unilever."

Mr Blair added: "The public sector will give a clear sign of its commitment to prepare. Each department now has a minister responsible for

euro preparations. Where computer systems are being upgraded, all departments will build in euro compatibility where that represents value for money. In the case of the DSS, the Inland Revenue and Customs, the scale and complexity of their computer systems make advance preparations critical."

"They may need to spend some money prior to a referendum to make their IT systems euro-compatible... such expenditure... will amount to some tens of millions of pounds spread over a number of years."

"Overall, we believe it should be possible to move in four months from a Government decision to a referendum; in 24-30 months from a positive referendum result to the introduction of notes and coins; and a further six months before sterling notes and coins are withdrawn."

"This means that the whole process from a positive referendum result to the withdrawal of sterling could be completed in around three years, considerably faster than the period required for the first wave of EMU participants."

Mr Blair went on: "It is worth summarising the economic tests the Chan-

cellor set out: sustainable convergence between the UK and countries within the euro-zone; flexibility to adapt to change in the UK and in continental Europe; the impact on investment and the UK financial services industry; and whether joining the single currency would be good for employment."

"Three points should be emphasised. The first is that economic convergence must be not momentary but, as far as we can accurately foresee, sustainable. We cannot say that yet."

"The second point is that these are early days for the euro itself. It is sensible to see how it settles down and how the ECB steers a path consistent with both strong economic discipline and the avoidance of deflation."

"And third, it will take some time to make a clear judgement about whether the direction of economic reform in Europe will enable us to meet the tests, particularly on flexibility and jobs."

"The single currency alone won't make Europe prosperous. The single currency plus fundamental reform in labour, capital and product markets and in our welfare systems, can do so."

"Madam Speaker, I commend this statement to the House."

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THE € DEBATE

Britain could switch to euro in 40 months

THE PLAN

By Jill Sherman and Roland Watson

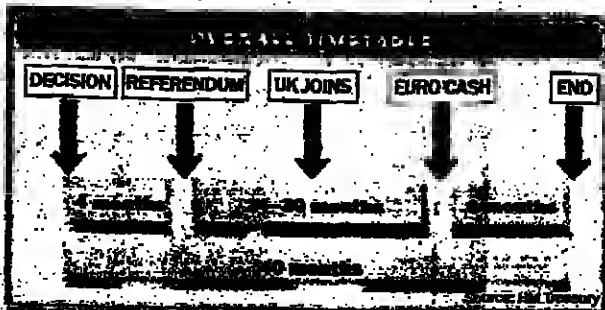
BRITISH notes and coins could be replaced by the euro in less than 40 months from a Cabinet decision that the UK should join a single currency.

The Government's National Changeover Plan shows that Tony Blair aims to speed up the process so that the UK can prepare more quickly than first-wave entrants managed.

While Treasury sources were making clear that no decision would be made till after the next election, the document gives business the green light to speed up its preparations. A decision could be made as early as late 2001, with Britain possibly joining economic and monetary union by 2003.

The Government's blueprint for change suggests that it would take four months from the time the cabinet decided the conditions were right to enter the euro for a referendum to be held.

This would depend on how quickly business managers could push through a referendum Bill — which was done within four months for the Scottish and Welsh plebiscites.



A referendum could then be held within two months. If the result was positive it would be put to Parliament in a comprehensive Bill, which could take a year to get through.

Before the UK could join, the European Commission and the European Central Bank would need to report to the European Council on whether the UK had met convergence criteria.

The document is impractical over when Britain would technically join the single currency. It argues that the timing would depend on whether different sectors of the economy were ready, particularly the banks and revenue departments.

It argues that the amount of pre-planning and practical work that takes place from now would be crucial in determining the speed of the changeover.

Some high-street banks could take up to three years to prepare while the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise could take between 12 to 18 months and financial markets would need to prepare for about 12 months.

But it would be retailers, utilities, public-sector services and organisations involved in producing and distributing euro notes and coins which would dictate when the currency could be introduced. The Royal Mint would require up

to 30 months to provide sufficient coins.

Provided detailed planning is taken forward now, this period could be completed within 24 to 30 months, the document suggests. It adds that the final period to the day when sterling is withdrawn from circulation would be up to six months, in line with advice from the Business Advisory Group — but could be as short as two.

The paper admits that further work with the banks and revenue departments would be necessary for a more precise timetable.

It suggests that a lot can be learned from the timetable of the first wave of single-currency entrants. It points out that member countries decided to go ahead in May 1998 and it will take a further 30 months before the euro is adopted fully. Britain could do it at least ten months quicker, the Government says.

Leading article, page 21



All change for the pound: shoppers and traders in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, tried out the euro last November

Telltale signs confirm it is when, not if

The medium was the message. Sometimes what matters is who says something and how they say it, as much as what they say. The real significance of yesterday's announcement about the National Changeover Plan was that it was made by Tony Blair — and the carefully-crafted formal statement revealed less than the tone of his replies to MPs' questions.

As Paddy Ashdown and other prominent pro-Europeans pointed out, Mr Blair signalled a major step forward. It was more than what Mr Blair called "a change of gear", if not perhaps the crossing of "the Rubicon" claimed by Mr Ashdown.

Mr Blair is now planning on the basis of the euro, succeeding, and Britain joining. The formal policy may still be "prepare and decide", but in practice, it is "prepare and enter provided, or rather when, economic conditions are right". And the latter conditions are largely in the eye of the beholder, though Mr Blair underlined continuing British worries over the need for further reform in European labour, capital and product markets — "a new social model for a new European reality".

Yet there is now no doubt about where either Mr Blair or William Hague stands on the central political question facing Britain. The caveats are still there, reflecting the natural desire of any leader not to box himself in. But the battle lines are clear. Mr Hague underlined his fundamental opposition in principle to joining a single currency, echoing Hugh Gaitskell's famous, or infamous, reference in 1962 to a thousand years of history. But Tory divisions have seldom been greater with Michael Heseltine, Kenneth Clarke, David Curry and Ian Taylor sitting together like a party within a party.

Mr Hague was right that

the Government is trying to create a step-by-step process whereby membership is seen as inevitable in the referendum because the euro has become an accepted part of life. That will be hard for the Tories to fight.

Yesterday's plan is intended to convince business of the seriousness of government preparations. Whitehall departments will spend "tens of millions" which will be authorised in the next few months. However, the Government has still not named a target date, so a degree of uncertainty remains. While Mr Blair shifted policy, several big questions remain unanswered. First, as Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, told MPs yesterday morning, monetary policy is not aimed at assisting entry into the euro. Talk of shadowing the euro is officially denied: instead, the aim is to "demonstrate delivering stability, including the exchange rate". The intention to pursue convergence will have to be more explicit.

Peter Riddell
ON POLITICS

Second, Mr Blair said: "We want to keep open the option of making a decision early in the next Parliament to join." The Blair camp claims that this could mean retaining the current formal approach in an election campaign. But Robin Cook is not alone in believing that the Government will have to declare its hand over a central issue of the campaign.

Third, and most important, will the Government take the lead in what is in effect a three-year referendum campaign? Mr Ashdown argued that leadership by stealth cannot continue. As Mr Heseltine urged, Mr Blair has to take a lead in what will be a cross-party campaign. Yesterday, he picked up the euro standard, even if he is not yet waving it.

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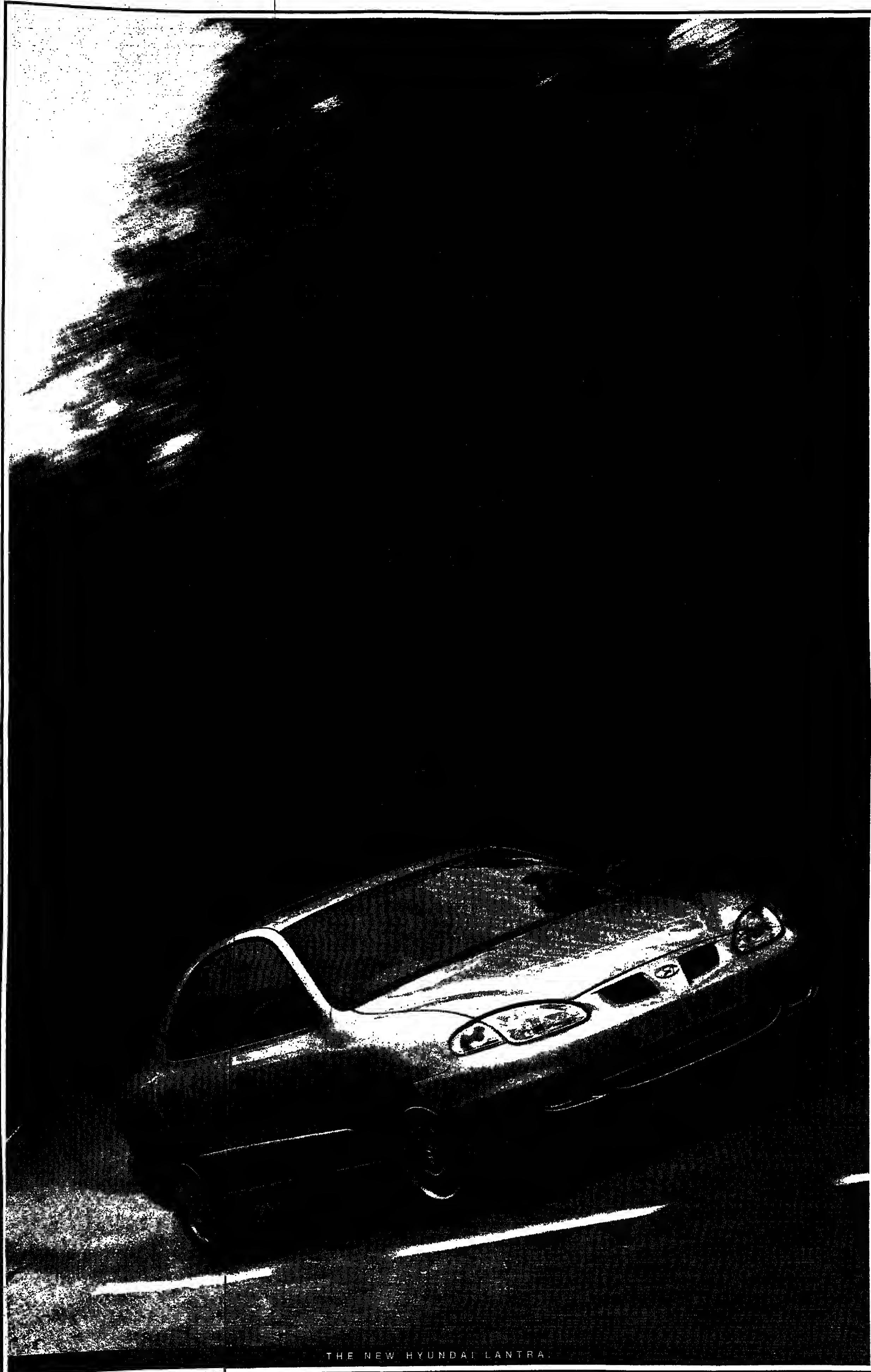
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هكذا في الأصل

Serb death shows reality of ceasefire

BUKOS is a pimple of a village that does not even appear on the map. Yet, while international mediators in Rambouillet agonised over how best to window-dress deadlock to the waiting world, the war visited its 800 inhabitants.

The skirmish there was barely significant, even by the standards of Kosovo's low-intensity conflict. Doubtless the handful of casualties would have been little more than statistics on an official release were it not for the presence of the media.

Kosovo, technically, slumbers under a ceasefire that is supposed to last for the duration of Rambouillet's negotiations. On Monday morning, however, a Serb offensive west of Vucitrin, about 21 miles north of Pristina, displaced more than 4,000 refugees in four hours of fighting.

The same night, Kosovo Liberation Army guerrillas came down from the snow-covered slopes and fired on Serb houses in Bukos, two miles to the south. One Serb civilian was

Peace talks give

Kosovo village

a taste of war,

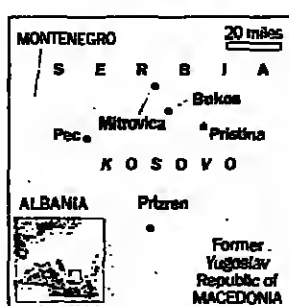
Anthony Loyd

in Bukos writes

killed and two others seriously wounded. Early yesterday, the mixed Serb-Albanian village filled with Serb police who escorted a team of investigators to the dead man's house while a small Yugoslav Army unit, backed by a tank and mortar crew, took up positions on the slopes to the south.

The KLA held positions to the west, north and east. They dropped a mortar round into the yard of the dead man's house as the Serb investigators entered. It wounded five policemen and a press photographer.

The police called up army re-



with the tank, and chaos descended in about two seconds. The sky and fields resounded with whistles, buzzes, cracks and thumps. Everyone appeared to be rolling around in the snow and mud. Our Land Rover picked its moment to slide gently off the track, sinking up to its axles in half-frozen slime.

We cursed and sweated and pushed, to no avail, as the bedlam continued. About 20 minutes later the shooting had stopped and I was smoking a Lucky Strike with a Serb officer. "So who is guilty today then, comrade, the Albanians or us?" he asked.

Around him, troops were regrouping in the good-natured mood that follows victory. The KLA, true to form, had fallen away from the slopes.

Bukos, in its entry to war, a tiny place on an average day, had its anonymity lifted by one dead and several wounded Serbs, together with an unknown number of guerrilla casualties. And that was during a ceasefire.



A Serb woman, whose husband was killed outside their house in Bukos, carries her belongings, including a rifle and shégun, from the building yesterday

Escape route mined

Pristina: Yugoslav Army engineers have placed explosives on a key bridge on the main highway connecting Kosovo's capital, Pristina, with the Macedonian border, according to a monitor with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe yesterday.

He said he witnessed about 20 army engineers burying a command cable of the sort that would be used to detonate explosive charges. The cable ran from a hut that was being fortified on the Pristina side of the bridge to the span itself.

An American diplomat with long experience in Yugoslavia said he understood the bridge was mined. "We have been reliably informed that the bridge is mined and could be blown at any time," he said.

A Western diplomat in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said: "The Yugoslav Army wouldn't be a match for Nato but they would use every means to frustrate an attack, including blowing up bridges and tunnels that Nato forces would want to use to enter Kosovo."

The bridge wired for detonation would be the main escape route for monitors. (Reuters)

British troops on hold during talks stalemate

BY TOM WALKER IN RAMBOUILLET AND MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE EDITOR

THE Rambouillet peace talks on Kosovo passed the final deadline without a deal yesterday, with neither Albanians nor Serbs signing anything.

Contact Group ministers claimed, however, that there had been an historic breakthrough. A new constitution for Kosovo appeared to have been agreed, but Belgrade said that a new United Nations force was being considered to implement a peace plan. Some even suggested that the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) could be asked to head a force, even though it has no military apparatus.

It was agreed that the talks should continue on Monday, March 15, at the Normandy town of Evreux. James Rubin, the US State Department spokesman, said the interval would give the Albanians time to consult their people, while the Serbs would have to bring themselves to accept that international troops were an inevitable consequence of any peace deal.

Last night, the planned deployment of 2,000 British troops in Skopje, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was postponed, following the announcement in Rambouillet. Troops from the proposed leading British armoured battle group, based on the King's Royal Hussars, had been due to arrive in the region by the end of this week to prepare for immediate deployment into Kosovo once a peace deal was signed.

However, with the inconclusive result of the talks, Operation Agricola, the British code-name for the planned Kosovo mission, has been "put on hold". Only hours before the announcement that another meeting had been fixed, George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said that the 2,000 British troops would be arriving in the Greek port of Salonika and in Skopje by the end of the week.

However, after hasty meetings at the Ministry of Defence, the deployments were shelved. The troops involved, all based at Osnabrück and Münster in northern Germany, will continue to make preparations for a Kosovo mission, but without any firm guarantee that approval will be given. The first batch of tanks and armoured combat vehicles is due to arrive at Salonika on board the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ferry, *Sea Centurion*, tomorrow.

The reputation of Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, has taken a beating over the past few days, as her efforts to secure an Albanian signature to at least half the peace plan were consistently thwarted by Hashim Thaci, the 29-year-old Kosovo Liberation Army leader. However, she said last night: "We have

decisively broken the stalemate that hung over Kosovo for so long."

Airstrikes were also off the agenda. Mrs Albright spoke only of "disincentives" towards Serb security forces, and warned the KLA not to provoke any incidents while a settlement was possible.

Diplomatic sources in Belgrade said that a new United Nations force was being considered to implement a peace plan. Some even suggested that the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) could be asked to head a force, even though it has no military apparatus.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, lost his temper after a string of questions about the peace force and said British



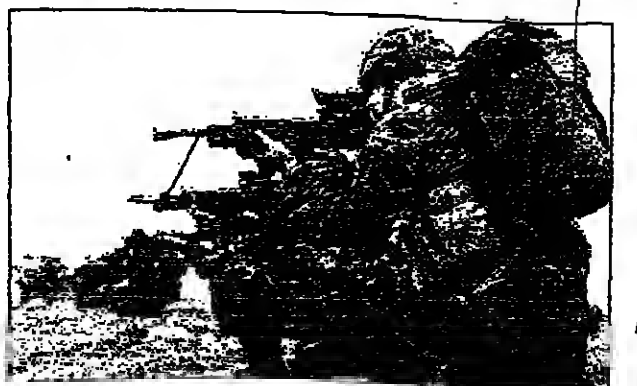
British Nato troops train in the snow in Skopje

troops would only be committed to Kosovo under Nato leadership. The Americans said they would also only contribute troops if they were Nato-led.

Mr Cook said: "We want a tried and trusted command structure." He added that he hoped Russian troops would join, making the force more palatable to Belgrade.

Hubert Védrine, the French Foreign Minister, denied that the Albanians had persuaded the Rambouillet mediator to include a referendum in the constitution, which would provide a clear route to independence after three years.

Mrs Albright denied the Kosovo Albanians had been cheated by Rambouillet. Do not despair, support those of your leaders who have supported peace, and America will stand with you," she said.



Firing practice continues for the Nato Extraction Force in Macedonia yesterday as talks stall

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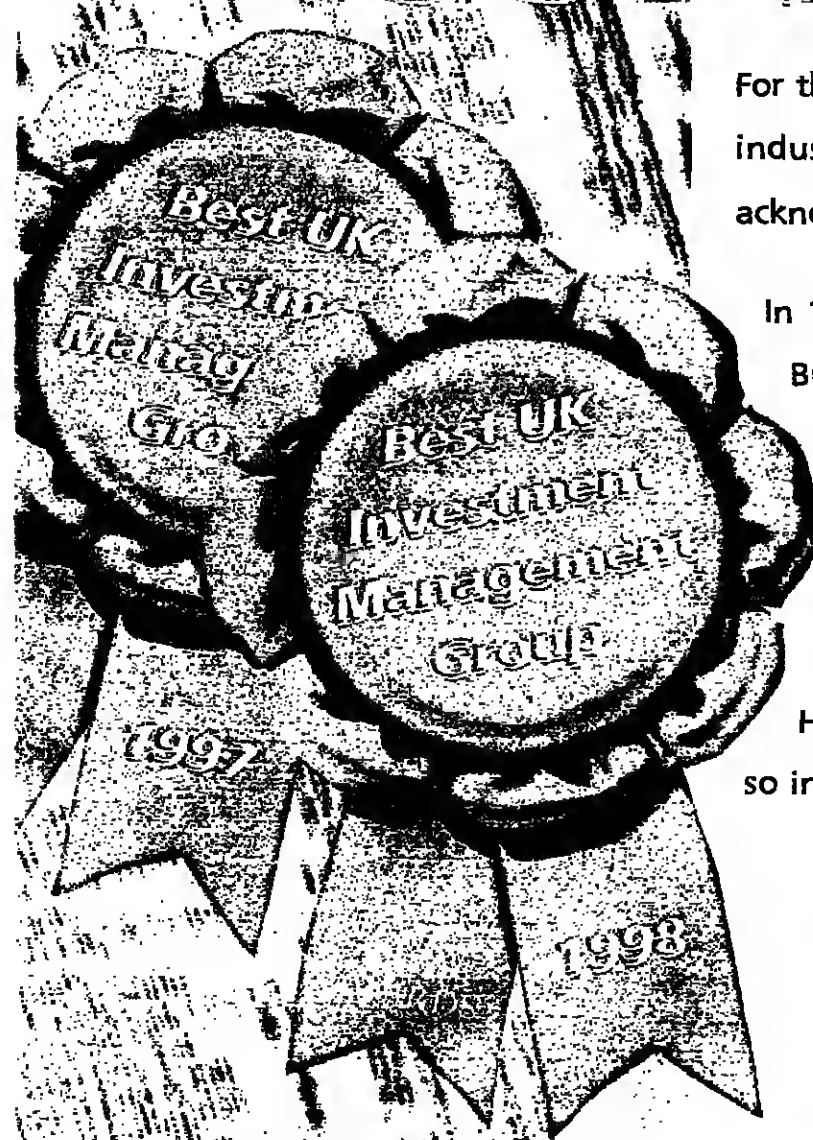
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Turkey seeks death penalty for Ocalan

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ISTANBUL

JUST over a week after his capture by Turkish special forces in Nairobi, Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish separatist leader, yesterday made his first appearance before Turkish judges on charges of treason. Turkish prosecutors said they would seek the death penalty, which has not been applied in Turkey since 1984. The hearing, on the prison island of Imrali, in the Sea of Marmara, was closed to the press and public. No date was set for the trial, which will be conducted by a special session of the Ankara State Security Court.



Ocalan: press banned from court appearance

However, officials said it would almost certainly begin next month in the run-up to the Turkish general election in April. A high security court-room is being constructed on the island which officials said was "along the lines of court-rooms in Italy for Mafia trials", with a special bullet-proof floor for Mr Ocalan.

Yesterday's hearing on Imrali was attended by Osman Baydemir, one of fifteen lawyers from the Turkish Human

Rights Association who have volunteered to defend Mr Ocalan. Dutch and Italian lawyers claiming to represent the Kurdish leader have been refused entry to Turkey. Onlookers spat and yelled abuse at Mr Baydemir as he boarded a boat for Imrali. He expressed concern that Mr Ocalan's interrogation had been conducted without a lawyer present.

Details of the interrogation have been released by the newspaper *Hurriyet*, which yesterday said that Mr Ocalan

had pleaded for his life, telling his questioners he was "full of remorse". "Please don't hang me," it quoted him as saying. "I will tell you everything."

Mr Ocalan, held responsible by Turkey for the deaths of 30,000 people during the 15-year Kurdish insurgency, is said to suffer from diabetes and high blood pressure as well as a heart complaint.

On Monday European Union foreign ministers called for "fair and correct treatment" of Mr Ocalan and an "open trial according to the rule of law before an independent court, with access to legal counsel of his choice and with international observers admitted".

The Turkish Foreign Ministry said that "the EU's idea of sending observers is not acceptable". But officials added that the court might allow "monitors" to be present.

According to *Hurriyet*, Mr Ocalan has admitted that his guerrillas fighting against Turkish rule in southeastern Turkey had received "rockets and other weapons" from Greece. Mr Ocalan also reportedly said that Greece had given training at Kurdish Workers' Party camps on Greek soil "for years" and had provided him with a passport in the name of a Greek Cypriot.

President Demirel said that Greece was a "rogue state" and that if it continued its "illegal actions" Turkey retained the right "to take necessary precautions in self defence".

Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish Prime Minister, said Greece had been "playing with fire".

Athens' Costas Simitis, the Greek Prime Minister, yesterday demanded that Syria put an end to Hezbollah attacks on Israeli troops in southern Lebanon. The call came hours after three members of an Israeli commando unit were killed in a gun battle and five more injured.

The attack was the most serious in Lebanon this year and the biggest loss of Israeli life there since September 1997, when 12 Israeli commandos were killed. It has placed Is-



One of the five Israeli soldiers wounded in yesterday's ambush in southern Lebanon

Hezbollah kills three Israelis

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

THE Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, yesterday demanded that Syria put an end to Hezbollah attacks on Israeli troops in southern Lebanon. The call came hours after three members of an Israeli commando unit were killed in a gun battle and five more injured.

The attack was the most serious in Lebanon this year and the biggest loss of Israeli life there since September 1997, when 12 Israeli commandos were killed. It has placed Is-

rael's future in Lebanon high on the agenda of all parties for the Israeli general election on May 17.

The shooting took place near the village of Meidoun, just north of the buffer zone that Israel has occupied in southern Lebanon since 1985, as the Israelis were on their way to attack Hezbollah (Party of God) targets and were ambushed. Mr Netanyahu, who had a friend among the injured, said: "It is clear that if Syria wanted to stop these

attacks it has the power to do so. We expect them to curtail aggression against Israel."

Israel retaliated with artillery shells and its warplanes fired four missiles after helicopters had strafed the area.

A statement from Hezbollah, which is armed and financed by Iran with the connivance of Syria, said its fighters intercepted the commandos as they were trying to cross into unoccupied Lebanon. It said the guerrillas had suffered no casualties.

CIA accused of inciting coup in Iraq

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

AMERICAN spies planted on a United Nations inspection team in Iraq may have had a hand in a failed military rebellion against Saddam Hussein, according to Scott Ritter, the former UN weapons monitor.

The former US Marine intelligence officer who ran the UN's most sensitive missions inside Iraq before resigning in disgust at Western policy says in a book that the CIA began sending agents on UN inspections at the start of 1992, a year after the end of the Gulf War.

The CIA role reached a climax with the presence of nine "CIA paramilitary covert operatives" on a UN inspection in June 1996 which coincided with a coup attempt by members of the same Special Republican Guard units that the UN team was investigating.

Ritter's opposition sources said the coup attempt was planned by a CIA-backed group known as the Iraqi National Accord, which smuggled in CIA communications equipment from Jordan. Iraqi intelligence arrested two Republican Guard officers involved and contacted the CIA on its own radio to announce that it had uncovered the plot.

The revelations are contained in galleys of Mr Ritter's forthcoming book, *Endgame*, leaked to *The New York Times* in an apparent response to a Pentagon demand that the author submit the manuscript for security clearance.

Iraq has always complained that the UN Special Commission (Unscm), set up after the war to eliminate Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction, was packed with American spies. The Iraqi Government once even expelled all the American inspectors after denouncing Mr Ritter as a spy, a charge he denies. US officials continue to insist, however, that Unscm acted as an independent technical agency in pursuit of goals set by the UN Security Council.

In the book Mr Ritter says that he and a CIA official, referred to as "Moe Dobbs", worked together "to plan the operational and intelligence support for the largest and most complex inspections undertaken by Unscm."

The CIA sent its largest contingent on the June 1996 mission to search compounds where elite troops were suspected of hiding evidence of Iraq's clandestine programmes to build chemical and biological weaponry. A stand-off developed when Iraq blocked the inspection, bringing swift condemnation from the Security Council. That very month, Iraqi dissidents staged an unsuccessful coup attempt.

"There was no proof of Do-

beir's involvement, but there was a strong set of coincidences," Mr Ritter writes.

□ Fresh attacks: In a third consecutive day of attacks yesterday, American F15E planes dropped 2,000lb "bunker buster" bombs on a military site in northern Iraq after they were targeted by anti-aircraft fire, the Pentagon said. In a second incident, other F15s attacked a multiple-launch rocket system near the city of Mosul. Baghdad said that one Iraqi was injured. (Reuters)



Ritter: resigned UN job in disgust over policy

Columnist sparks anti-Times tirade

Istanbul: Turkish papers urged their readers yesterday to "inundate" *The Times* with faxes, letters and e-mail to protest against a column in which Simon Jenkins, the former Editor of *The Times*, ironically urged the West to "bomb Turkey" (Richard Owen writes).

"Many Turks appear not to have understood that Mr Jenkins meant not that we should bomb Turkey but exactly the opposite," one Western diplomat said. "It seems that irony does not translate."

Sabah and *Hurriyet* both published the telephone, fax and e-mail numbers of *The Times*. In his column last Friday Mr Jenkins wrote that the

British and US Governments were too ready to use bombs. "Bomb Turkey now," he began. "Flatten Ankara. Tomahawk the Bosphorus. If we can bomb Serbia for the Kosovans and bomb President Saddam Hussein for the Iraqi Kurds, we can surely bomb Turkey for their mountain brothers."

Sabah did not explain that Mr Jenkins was condemning such attitudes, or quote his observation that where "Britain used to send humanitarian aid to trouble spots, it now sends explosives".

Simon Jenkins, page 20
Letters, page 21

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US governors back Bush for president

IN AN unusually early show of support, at least half of America's Republican state governors are ready to endorse the White House ambitions of George W. Bush.

Their backing emerged in Washington yesterday as word spread on the political grapevine that Mr Bush, Governor of Texas and son of the former President, was preparing to take his first official step towards running for President. He is expected to announce the formation of an exploratory committee within three weeks.

At the same time, Pete Wilson, the former Governor of California, confirmed that he would not be entering the Republican presidential primaries, having concluded that Mr Bush has gained so much momentum that his early lead in several key polls is insurmountable. With Mr Bush already competing for the attention of big donors, Mr Wilson realised he would be unable to raise the \$25 million (£15.4 million) needed to run a credible campaign.

Mr Bush has conceded that he is "warming to the task" of trying to win back the White House that his father lost to Bill Clinton in 1992. "Tim McGough, a Massachusetts politician, said that Mr Bush told him of his plans for the exploratory committee in a call last week and said: 'I have a feeling of calm inside myself.'"

Earlier concerns that Mr Bush might not run out of consideration for the impact on his wife and teenage twin daughters are fading. They are now expected to support his candidacy.

On the crucial money front, Mr Bush has begun privately assembling a team to raise \$25 million with phone calls and

Top Republicans lend support as favourite warms to the task, Ian Brodie writes

meetings in Austin, the Texas state capital, and Washington. He has seen investment bankers from California, East Coast property tycoons and wealthy Texas oil men. Contributors to past campaigns of the elder Bush are being recruited for his son.

Opinion polls show Mr Bush to be the leading contender for the Republican nomination, but nipping at his heels is Elizabeth Dole, wife of Bob Dole who lost to Mr Clinton in 1996. She has resigned as president of the American Red Cross to give serious thought to running.

Both Mr Bush and Mrs Dole beat Al Gore, the likely Democratic candidate, in pollsters' mythical match-ups. The support for Mr Bush by as many as 16 of America's 31 Republican governors was seen as unprecedented for a non-incumbent White House hopeful who has yet to declare officially. Their ranks grew during the three-day winter meeting of the nation's governors in Washington.

"Nobody wants to be left behind," said John Rowland, Governor of Connecticut. Marc Ricketts, Governor of Montana, said: "They like him, they trust him and they think he can win." Frank Keating, Governor of Oklahoma, said: "He's done an excellent job as Governor. He appeals to a cross-section of the people. And I really think Texas represents the rest of the country."

Mr Bush's popularity in Texas was proved last November when he was re-elected in a landslide. He enjoys the nickname of "Dubya" from his middle initial, spoken in a Texan twang. He has already developed a thick skin for questions about his personal life, especially his wilder, younger days. He talks openly about his inability to handle alcohol which he swore off 12 years ago when he was 40. He refuses to answer questions about possible drug use in his youth.

Mr Bush had a chance to size up the White House for the first time since his father departed during a dinner that Mr Clinton gave for the governors. He also clashed with the President during a discussion by opposing an Administration plan to tie federal education aid to school performance. While agreeing with Mr Clinton's goals for better schools and teachers, Mr Bush demanded flexibility in the way funds from Washington are spent.

"The federal Government should be a limited partner. If they feel like sending money to the states, fine, but don't tell us how to run things," he said.

Fellow governors backing Mr Bush include moderates and conservatives, including his brother Jeb who is Governor of Florida. George Bush Sr, living in retirement in Houston, is urging his son to run.

George W. Bush says that, after early doubts, he views with growing enthusiasm the task of trying to win back the White House his father lost to Bill Clinton



George W. Bush says that, after early doubts, he views with growing enthusiasm the task of trying to win back the White House his father lost to Bill Clinton

Texas awaits verdict on 'rider from hell'

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON



John "Bill" King is escorted from court after giving evidence earlier this week

A JURY retired to consider its verdict last night after a prosecutor told it that a white supremacist was one of three "riders coming straight out of hell", who had dragged a black man to an agonising death behind a pick-up truck.

The 11 whites and one black deliberating at the courthouse in rural Jasper, east Texas, have to decide first if John "Bill" King is guilty of killing James Byrd and then if he deserves the death penalty. In his closing argument, Pat Hardy, the prosecutor, said that the evidence was incontrovertible.

"After they dragged that poor man and dragged him to pieces, they dropped him at a cemetery to show their defiance of God and Christianity and everything most people stand for," he said.

Under Texas law, Mr King would receive a lethal injection, rather than a life sentence, only if

he was found to have murdered his victim while committing another crime. Prosecutors have been pushing hard to show that Mr Byrd was being kidnapped when the murder took place.

In a bid to save his client from execution if convicted of murder, Brack Jones argued for the defence that the chaining and dragging was the method of the killing, not intentional kidnapping.

Before concluding its case, the prosecution provided some of the most gruesome evidence of the trial when it called a pathologist who said that he believed Mr Byrd was alive and writhing in pain as he was dragged by his chained ankles along a rough road for more than two miles behind the truck. He was decapitated when he hit a concrete culvert in the road.

"He was attempting to keep his head off of the pavement. He was

conscious," said Tommy Brown, who performed the autopsy on Mr Byrd a day after the murder.

The defence in the case consisted of just three witnesses, including a fellow inmate of Mr King's during an earlier spell in prison who has applied some of the defendant's many tattoos and said they were not racist but "looked cool, that's all".

Mr King, 24, is accused of being the ringleader who wanted to kill to gain publicity for his new racist gang when he and his flatmates, Lawrence Brewer, 31, and Shawn Berry, 24, picked up Mr Byrd as he was hitchhiking home in the early hours.

They are alleged to have taken him to a back road and given him a severe beating with various tools before shackling him with the 24ft logging chain for his final journey.

The other two defendants face trial later this year.

US blocks satellite sale to Beijing

BY IAN BRODIE

THE Clinton Administration yesterday blocked the sale of an advanced communications satellite to China, citing national security. The satellite, costing \$450 million (£280 million), was to have provided a mobile telephone network stretching over much of Asia.

Washington refused export licences to Hughes Electronics because of concerns about the network's probable value to the Chinese military. There were also worries at the Pentagon that the technology needed to place the satellite in orbit would help the Chinese to make their fleet of intercontinental ballistic missiles more accurate.

Parliament puts Cresson to test

Brussels: The future of Edith Cresson, the embattled European Union Commissioner, appeared more uncertain last night after she submitted to a humiliating public interrogation by the European Parliament and insisted that she bore no guilt for alleged fraud and nepotism committed under her stewardship (Charles Bremner writes).

The most embarrassing moment for the former French Prime Minister came when Michael Tappin, a British Labour MEP, distributed a file on her employment of René Berthelot, a dentist friend from her home town of Châtelleraut, where she was a long-serving mayor. Mr Tappin called on her to resign for "creating the atmosphere of cronyism".

Anwar names attacker

Kuala Lumpur: Anwar Ibrahim, right, Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister, directly implicated a former police chief as the man who beat him in custody, an inquiry heard (David Watts writes). It was the first time that Tan Sri Rahim Noor had been blamed for the beating which gave Mr Anwar a black eye and caused a world outcry.



Eritrea under attack

Addis Ababa: The war in the Horn of Africa worsened with Ethiopia launching a big offensive, including airstrikes, against Eritrea. The Eritrean Foreign Ministry announced the offensive as a communiqué in Addis Ababa said the Ethiopian Air Force and heavy artillery units had attacked positions on all three fronts on Sunday and Monday. Eritrea said that its forces had destroyed nine Ethiopian tanks and captured two, while repelling the western front assault. (AFP)

Tortured men backed

Harare: A magistrate here has ruled that two journalists tortured by military interrogators last month should be allowed to visit a London clinic specialising in therapy for torture victims (Jan Raath writes). The decision came after lawyers for Mark Chavunduka, 37, editor of the *Standard*, and Ray Choto, 33, a reporter, submitted medical evidence of their injuries. But state lawyers immediately prevented their departure for London with a High Court challenge to the ruling.

Victim left arm behind

Marseilles: A motorcyclist, suffering from shock, left part of an arm at the scene of an accident, but doctors reattached it after police found the limb. Olivier Fauré, 21, who was hit by a car in southern France, was taken home by another driver without realising his left forearm had been severed. His mother alerted emergency workers while M Fauré was taken to hospital. Police found the arm dozens of yards from the accident scene and it was reattached in a 12-hour operation. (AP)

Briton held hostage

Bogotá: A Briton is among 16 foreigners being held hostage by Colombian rebels, the head of the country's anti-kidnapping unit said. The others are a Japanese, two French, four Italians, three Spaniards, one Algerian, three Venezuelans and a Chilean. Several of the foreigners, being held by three different groups, were seized at random at roadblocks which the rebels routinely set up. (AFP)

Ukraine leader held

Moscow: Pavlo Lazarenko, left, a former Prime Minister of Ukraine arrested last week for trying to enter the United States without the correct documents, is in custody awaiting a decision by immigration authorities (Anna Blundy writes). Ukraine has sought his extradition over the theft of more than £1.2 million of state property.

'Pregnant' baby saved

Hanoi: A four-month-old Vietnamese girl with a severely distended stomach and vomiting was found to contain the developing foetus of her two siblings. Tran Dong A, a surgeon at Ho Chi Minh City's Pediatric II Hospital, said the foetuses had been removed in a three-hour operation. He added that the baby was thin but in a stable condition. (Reuters)

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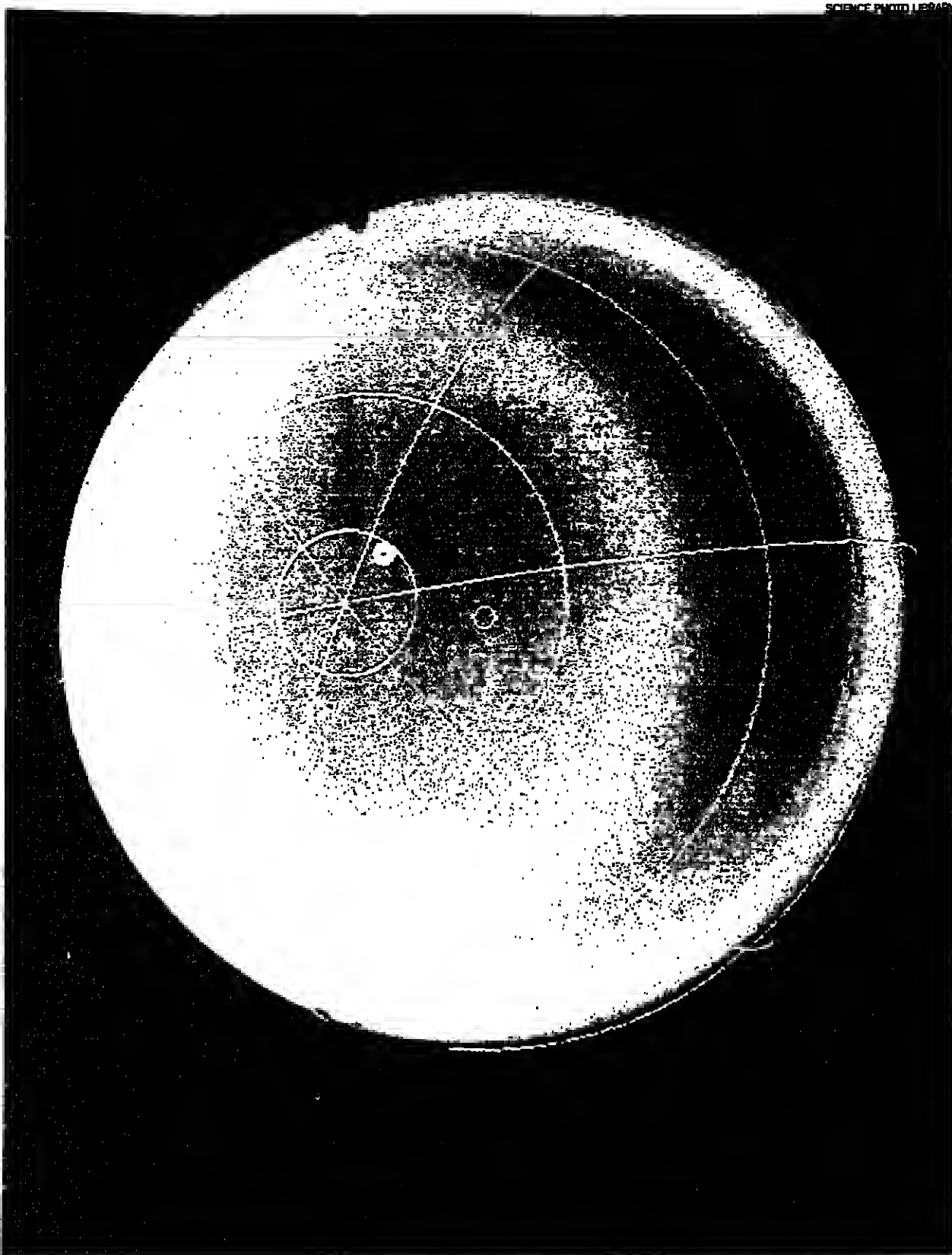
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The unluckiest stargazer of all



An image of Uranus, taken from the *Voyager II* space probe in 1986. Early astronomers believed the planet to be a star

The planet Uranus, a vast and trackless ball of gas in the outer reaches of the solar system, was discovered not once but 22 times. Credit is given to William Herschel, who, on March 13, 1781, was the first to realise that the object others had catalogued as a star was something else. He believed — quite wrongly, as it turned out — that it was a comet.

If an amateur astronomer from Manchester is right, the list of those who saw Uranus but failed to realise that it was anything out of the ordinary is about to get even longer. Kevin Kilburn, a materials manager for a Manchester plastics company, believes that Dr John Bevis, an 18th-century astronomer, may have spotted Uranus more than 40 years before Herschel.

To claim a planet is to grasp immortality. But before Herschel identified it, Uranus slipped through the fingers of John Flamsteed, who saw it six times, James Bradley (twice), Pierre Le Monnier (12 times) and Johann Tobias Mayer. All recorded it as nothing but a star.

Le Monnier's is the most inexplicable case, since he saw Uranus eight times in four weeks in December 1768 and January 1769. A planet, if seen more than once, ought to be easily distinguishable from a star because of its movement. But in poor Le Monnier's case, Uranus was near its stationary point when he made his observations.

John Bevis was a keen astronomer with an unlucky streak. He might now be remembered as the discoverer of a planet and the author of one of the finest star atlases of the 18th century, as well as the first man to identify the Crab Nebula. In fact he is forgotten.

Mr Kilburn's rehabilitation of Bevis began one evening in November 1997, when he and two fellow members of the Manchester Astronomical Society, Tony Cross and Michael Oates, were examining a mysterious star atlas in the society's collection. It was old, but they had no idea what it was.

Research convinced them that what they had was a copy of Bevis's star atlas, *Uranographia Britannica*, which he compiled from his own obser-

Did a forgotten astronomer discover the planet Uranus? Nigel Hawkes reports

ations and from those of John Flamsteed and Edmund Halley. Valued at £25,000, it is one of fewer than 20 copies known to survive and one of the most complete versions anywhere.

Born in 1693, Bevis had studied medicine at Christ Church, Oxford, where Newton's *Opticks* was his inseparable companion, the *Dictionary of National Biography* records. He practised as a doctor in London but grew dissatisfied



The Constellation of the Great Bear, from Bevis's atlas

and, in 1738, moved to Stoke Newington, where he set up an observatory. Here he worked feverishly, often measuring the transit across the sky of 160 stars in a single night.

By 1745 he was ready to publish an exact view of the heavens in 52 large plates, containing more detail than any previous atlas. But shortly before publication, says Mr Kilburn, fate dealt Bevis a shocking blow. His publisher, John Neale, went bankrupt and the copper plates, ready for the printer, were sequestered by the Court of Chancery.

Bevis died in 1771. In 1785, his library came on to the market. It contained three proof copies of the atlas and a lot of loose, first-impression star charts, which were sold to an anonymous buyer and appeared on the market again the following year in bound form as the *Atlas Celeste*, with no credit to Bevis. It is a copy

of this "ghost book", as it became known, which was rediscovered last year in the cupboard at the Godlee Observatory in Manchester. The society has produced a version on CD-Rom at £13.99, which can be ordered online from its Web page, <http://www.u-net.com/ph/mas>.

The atlas shows that Bevis must have been the first to observe the Crab Nebula, later independently discovered by

logued by Messier as M22, in the constellation of Sagittarius. Bevis's observations were recorded in the ghost book and certainly hint that he may have recorded Uranus.

His plate, says Mr Kilburn, shows a triangle of stars to the right of M22. Such a triangle does not exist, although two of the stars can be identified as 24 and 25 Sagittarii. The third cannot be seen on modern star maps, yet the engraving shows all three as objects of similar size. The two known stars have magnitudes of 5.5 and 6.5, while Uranus in June 1738 would have been less than half a degree from the position of the third, non-existent star, and of magnitude 5.7.

Left of M22 is another star, which could be 26 Sagittarii but is shown as brighter than that star actually is. Could this be Uranus, which in May 1738 was very close by? Small errors in Bevis's recordings' position are possible, and the engraver of the plates made occasional errors, too.

So did Bevis discover Uranus? The case is plausible but unproved. The failure of *Uranographia Britannica* to be published was not, alas, the last of his disappointments. He was not, as he had hoped, appointed Astronomer Royal and so returned to medicine, but his passion for astronomy could not be quenched and it eventually killed him. On November 6, 1771, when observing the Sun's meridian altitude, he turned too quickly from telescope to clock and sustained a fall, from the effects of which he died.

He was, says the *Dictionary of National Biography*, "of a mild and benevolent disposition", his astronomical work distinguished more by diligence than by precision. Had he had less of one and a little more of the other, he might now be as famous as Herschel.

The dangers of iodine deficiency

Human beings are extraordinarily dependent on iodine. For want of it, a child born as perfect as any other can descend into cretinism, physically deformed and mentally retarded. A more modest deficiency can cause goitre, the enlargement of the thyroid gland as it strives to function on inadequate iodine supplies.

Today Britain is free from iodine-deficiency diseases, though it has never been quite clear why. While many other countries introduced iodine into salt or bread on a compulsory basis, this was never done here. Iodised salt is available in Britain but its use has declined. Yet in the past half-century, and especially since 1960, goitre has disappeared.

The best explanation for this is milk. Since the 1960s milk has become the main source of iodine in the diet, followed by meat. The rise of milk as an iodine source is partly the result of iodine added to animal feed-

stuffs, and partly to luck. Cows milked in modern parlours have their udders and teats sterilised by iodine antiseptics, and some of this finds its way into the milk.

That meat and milk are the main sources of iodine could, however, be a problem to those who eat neither, as a study carried out in Germany and published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* shows. Vegans, in particular, could be at serious risk of iodine deficiency.

A team from the Research Institute of Child Nutrition in Dortmund, Germany, studied six adult volunteers on different diets. Dr Thomas Remer and colleagues report that even those on non-vegetarian diets had a low iodine intake, around 35-40 micrograms a day com-



SCIENCE BRIEFING
Nigel Hawkes

pared with the current recommendation in Germany of 200 micrograms a day. But the vegetarian volunteer was even lower — 16 micrograms a day. This particular person did not eat fish or seafood, a good source of iodine, but did drink milk. The German study does in with work in Switzerland and New Zealand, showing declines in iodine intake, says Dr Lena Davidsson, of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in a commentary in the same issue of the journal. One reason may be the decline in salt consumption, driven by worries over its effects on blood pressure. Iodised salt remains an important source of iodine in many countries. Dr Alan Long, a vegetarian and nutritionist, says that

vegans, and those who do not drink milk, need to take the German study seriously. He is aware of at least one vegan in Britain who was found to be iodine-deficient and prescribed treatment before any damage was done. But he fears that there may be others.

In other parts of the world, iodine deficiency remains a serious problem. Even today it is estimated that in the developing world about 750 million people suffer from goitre, and 5.7 million from cretinism. Iodine can be bought in the form of pills, often derived from seaweed, but Dr Long complains that they are frequently badly labelled and give incorrect analyses of iodine content. Some years ago he persuaded the Ministry of Agriculture to commission analyses of 60 commercial supplements, which showed that many were inaccurately labelled. One contained ten times as much iodine as the label claimed, which would raise intakes to toxic levels.

Hot spots that can change a locust's brain

AN early exposure to high temperatures appears to have permanent effects on the brains of locusts, enabling them to fly in very hot conditions. Those raised in temperate climates and then transferred to a warm desert often have trouble flying, and some of them even die, says Dr Nino Ramirez, of the University of Chicago. But those that have been exposed to a brief blast at 45C have no trouble.

Together with colleagues he investigated why, and they report in the *Journal of Physiology* that the heat shock has permanent effects. They exposed 40 locusts to temperatures of 45C for three hours, gave them six to 24 hours to recover, and then compared slices of their brains — a very delicate operation, which nobody had done before — with those of locusts who had been kept at room temperature. Tools thinner than a human hair were needed.

They found that potassium outflow from the brain cells of the heat-shocked locusts was greatly reduced. Dr Ramirez suspects that this might reduce the sensitivity of the neurons responsible for movement, enabling the locusts to continue flying in extreme conditions.

Now he is turning his attention to mice to see if their brain cells can also adapt to extreme temperatures. Understanding the protection conferred by heat might ultimately be useful in protecting the brains of stroke patients, he believes.

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Badger mystery



DESPITE legislation designed to protect it, the badger is still persecuted. As many as 9,000 badger sets are dug each year, in almost all cases illegally. Many others die on the roads. So it might be assumed that the best bet for a badger would be to choose to live in the most remote place it could find.

Not so, according to a study by two biologists from the Manchester Metropolitan University, published in the *Journal of Zoology*. They found that badgers do best if they

live in public places, in open country close to roads or public footpaths. The more points of public access, the better — presumably because people who would dig sets or set their dogs on badgers are less likely to do so if they risk being seen.

Paradoxically, the study also shows that badgers do better on the land of farmers opposed to badger conservation. Explaining this is a bit of a puzzle, but it is possible that such uncooperative landowners are as opposed to trespassers as they are to badgers. The researchers' conclusion is clear: "We suggest that existing public access may be benign or even beneficial in areas of high wilful persecution," they say.



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A far cry from Jean Machine

Despite his huge success, Tommy Hilfiger craves higher recognition.
Interview by Lisa Armstrong



The Hilfiger look: the upscale designs for this summer

All American, a pictorial style tome by Tommy Hilfiger, is speckled with his convivial aperçus. On fashion conformists he says: "I was one." On English rock: "It's influenced me totally." On jeans: "They should look and feel faded and comfortable, and be somewhat irreverent, like you don't have a regular job and you don't care."

Hilfiger, one senses, wants to be liked, wants to be on first names with the world — witness the name of his hugely successful brand, Tommy.

Occasionally be-fanned, but sometimes in hand-made suits from his favourite London tailors, Anderson & Sheppard, he stands astride a clothing empire about which, one imagines, he cares very much.

Enough, at any rate, for the fashionistas' disinclination to regard him as a serious designer to rankle, even though he says that he has come to terms with "being someone who makes clothes that aren't outrageously expensive and sells to the young".

But, he concedes, he would like to be regarded as "an important American Designer". This seems unlikely, despite Red Label, a new upscale line of men's and women's clothes,

that he has hopes of seeing at the Oscars. If not, it will be in his store at New Bond Street, London — 16,000 sq ft of Tommy's World — which opened yesterday. He should worry. Tommy Hilfiger Inc turns over \$1.5 billion (£909 million) a year and is giving Ralph Lauren a run for his Polo shirts (the latter recently laid off 250 staff, one consequence, according to *The New York Times*, of Hilfiger's success).

Hilfiger, who owns a quarter of the company, is personally valued at around \$100 million (£62 million) — enough to finance his personal staff of 12: the 22-room clapham Colefax & Fowlered farmhouse in Greenwich, Connecticut, from where his helicopter journey into work every day takes 15 minutes; the spread in Mustique; and to see his four children, aged between three and 13, through private school.

His personal life is markedly sane. His wife, Susie, runs her own business selling traditional English-style children's clothes. Her nostalgic style is as far removed from Tommy Hilfiger merchandise as Milly Molly Mandy is from Tank Girl. These contradictions are one of the endearing aspects about Hilfiger. If the label is straightforward in its dem-



Tommy Hilfiger, the American designer, has a new store, Tommy's World, in New Bond Street, London

cratic, youthful American vision, the man is less clear-cut. The alliances with the more controversial personalities in showbusiness — from Mick Jagger and Michael Jackson to Hugh Grant and Snoop Doggy Dog — are only part of the story.

His offices, above Fifth Avenue, are accessorised with a couple of electric Gibson guitars ("Tommy likes to play," says his PR, "but not so you'd

like to hear."). But they are also furnished with WASPy sisal matting, weathered leather armchairs, and black and white framed photos.

His earliest ad bore the notorious legend: "The four great designers for men are ~~Keano~~ ~~Leone~~ ~~perce~~ ~~Evans~~ ~~Cassidy~~ ~~Keano~~ and ~~Tommy Hilfiger~~." For someone whose fashion expertise at that point comprised a stint as a sales assistant in Jean Machine on the King's Road, London, and a moderately successful jeans line that went into chapter 11, this was an enviable display of self-belief.

"Those ads were thought up by George Lois, who is a marketing genius. I was a little embarrassed at their tone in the beginning," he says, "but it would have taken years to get known without them."

The latest tactic, of developing an upmarket line to headline the existing ones, is the reverse of normal procedure, which creates an aspirational image before plunging into diffusion markets. But it might well work. Red Label is stuffed with wearable pieces any wannabe rock chick would love.

Born 46 years ago in Elmira, in New York State, Hilfiger was one of nine children of a Catholic watchmaker, and left school early ("They thought I was dyslexic"). He came to London and returned a year later to put his Jean Machine experience to some use. "I found working there boring — it was just piles of blue jeans." With his last \$150 he bought 20 pairs of bell-bottoms and opened a boutique entitled People's Place. Five years later he had ten stores and a Porsche 911. By 1977 People's Place was in trouble. "I was hard on myself. I vowed never to fall into sloppy work habits again. Money, after a certain point," he says, "is not what drives me." So what does? "Fear of failure."

One imagines him being a no-nonsense father, although he says: "I'm trying hard not to be too hard on my kids." Certainly they are not paraded in public and didn't attend his fashion show in Manhattan last week. "They had homework and school the next day." Whatever one thinks of this bid for normality, there is one small chink in Tommy World: while his three sons are happy to have their Dad's name across their chests, his daughter prefers the plainer stuff. "She's not crazy about logos, you see."

It's weird but it's new England

A new Kent estate is being marketed as a perfect English village. But Celia Brayfield is not convinced

Who would buy a house from a man who edges his driveway with begonias? Or from a woman named Sharon who wears a white hard hat instead of white high heels? The answer is supplied by a BBC documentary that captures Mondo Man and Mike Leigh Woman buying the houses of their dreams on the new estate at King's Hill, near Maidstone in Kent.

Let's get the language right. It's not a house, it's a home; the developer, Crest Homes, says so. And it's not an estate, it's a village; the super-developers, Rouse Kent Ltd, says so, and points to village features such as a village green and a village golf course. And she's not a Mike Leigh Woman, she calls herself a "millennial ruralist", and she's clear that "like most people who've grown up in towns and suburbs, I have a feeling that I'd like to be closer to the good things in rural life". But she doesn't want "that cocked thing waking you up at 3am", and Sharon doesn't want any village-style mud in the show home because that would give buyers the message that Crest Homes doesn't care.

This is a subtle documentary, perhaps too subtle, but a dignified respite from the grotesque junk that now passes for factual TV. The film-makers spent a year recording the building, marketing, sale and occupation of 53 new homes in this ground-breaking, ah, village. We can make up our own minds about the saleswoman who explains how to push buyers into higher mortgages — "If they don't know what they can afford, try to steer them in the right direction."

The programme deserves to be archived because it records a piece of England in the process of defining itself. We, the English, are supposed to be having an identity crisis, but nobody has told them on King's Hill, where they're naming streets after the English apple varieties that don't grow in Kent any more.

The show-home designer knows how we see ourselves — school of House & Garden circa 1989, which means chintz-effect curtains with tie-backs, sloping ceilings in the bedrooms, fitted carpets, double doors. The architects were in no doubt ei-

ther, going for diamond-paned leaded-light windows and vernacular-style brickwork. "People like houses with a front door in the middle and four windows at the front, like children draw," says Sharon. She must be right. Crest Estates aims to sell its villages before they are built and the show home always goes first. They have to budget for the theft of everything pocket-sized in the building, presumably by people who don't know they can afford prices from £125,000 to just under £300,000.

King's Hill is the Utopia of the Nineties, the latest attempt at something we've been trying to get right all this century. Its 650-acre site was once West Malling airfield, and it is 15 miles from the M25, an hour from London and just more than two hours from Paris. Kent County Council, with a stiff quota of new homes to provide, brought in Rouse Kent, affiliates of an American real estate investment trust, who "master-planned" the site. In order of priority, its vision was of a business park employing 10,000 people, the golf course, 1,850 homes, schools, shops, a pub, a medical centre, the University of Greenwich, sports grounds and public art.

The masterplan included recycling the airfield concrete, replanting the wild orchids and replacing trees cut down. In 1996 Tony Blair visited to bless King's Hill, which he called "a fantastic development". Now, 550 homes and two public sculptures into the masterplan, it seems fantastic in many senses.

The people who moved in are youngish, upwardly mobile white families who are happy to sign covenants agreeing not to threaten property values by painting their front doors forbidden colours, or flaunting their dustbins.

This is not a village, it is an instant conurbation. Sharon's customers seem classless, cultureless and rootless, ready to mortgage their souls for a view of the golf course. King's Hill will shortly be declared a new parish, but there is no church. It's weird, but it is real and it may be the new England.

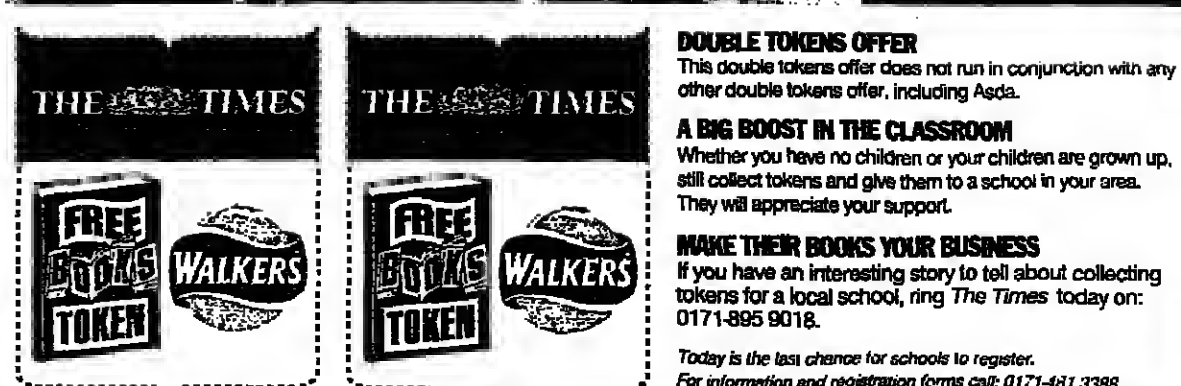
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Darkness visible in Mississippi

The South is another country, and Faulkner the best guide

There are two ways to get to Oxford, Mississippi, from the state capital, Jackson. You can follow the Natchez road, an old Indian trail straight north into the hill country. Or you can take the flat back roads through the battered Delta towns. They used to be synonymous with the blues and with the worst poverty in America, but they have had the edge of their bleakness rubbed off by the cash from new casinos.

Either way, you are likely to be going to this Southern town for only one of two reasons. Either you're visiting "Ole Miss", the University of Mississippi, itself hardly free from the taint of the state's racist history. Or you are drawn by the William Faulkner industry, which has flourished in the town where he lived most of his life.

There is a case not just for thinking Faulkner is one of America's greatest writers, but for actually reading the books. And, incidentally, for visiting Oxford. I say that somewhat defensively, because so many people hold the opposite view with passion. "Some of the sentences are longer than a page," said one of my Washington colleagues incredulously. If I wanted to bother with visiting a shrine to the South, he continued, I would be better off going to Graceland.

But thousands do make the pilgrimage to Oxford. The town was ambivalent about Faulkner during his life. It has been less so since he won the Nobel Prize, and the value of the tourism became obvious. The square around the courthouse, lined with coloured brick and wooden two-storey buildings, is unchanged from his lifetime — or from his writing. At any time of year, it will attract crowds of fans, many from European universities where the study of the Old South has become hugely fashionable.

They take trips to his grave, to trip a bottle of whiskey into its grassy surround. Or they walk 20 minutes to his white, pillared house, Rowan Oak, to look reverentially at his bed, his spare wooden furniture, his stables, and at the many photographs of a surprisingly small man stroking tall horses. Despite the quietness of Rowan Oak, it was a troubled life. His wife tried to commit suicide on honeymoon: she survived to negotiate a marriage that was an alcohol-drenched battlefield. Faulkner had one daughter, and too many lovers.

Given the darkness of Faulkner's life and work, there is inevitably something comic about the middle-aged groups. Long strangers to Bohemia, they are trying nevertheless to relive the excitement they felt during their college literature courses. Many of the female pilgrims wear ethnic jewellery at the neck and ears, open-toed leather sandals on their feet, and something shapeless and cotton in between. One fan, in late middle age, appeared to be offering herself in sacrifice. She was wearing a T-shirt inscribed with the famous quotation: "If a writer has to rob his mother,

he will not hesitate: the Ode on a Grecian Urn is worth any number of old ladies."

But the reverence, if a touch comic, is justified by the writing. In just seven years, from 1929 to 1936, he produced an extraordinary series of books: *Sartoris*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Sanctuary*, *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!*.

He was, by his own description, a Southern writer, and that is inescapably part of the interest. He wrote about the extraordinary period after the Civil War, but before the Second World War, when the South had not yet been transformed by the flood of cash from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal.

His writing goes to the heart of the preoccupations which made the South so separate from the rest of the country — and sometimes still do. "Tell about the South," commands a character in *Absalom, Absalom!*, which many call his greatest novel. "What's it like there, what do they do there, why do they live there, why do they live at all?"

The South was haunted by obsession with defeat at the hands of the North, with the failure of a tradition, a way of life and an economic system. As Faulkner put it, the "deep South dead since 1865" was "peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts" still protesting at that catastrophic humiliation, Faulkner romanticises the culture of the South before the Civil War, denying what he called the "old shame" of slavery. He nurtures the myth, like *Gone with the Wind*, of happy plantations, with blacks and whites living harmoniously together.

But beyond those localised themes from the Civil War, there is an immersion in the darker, age-old wars between the sexes and the races. The stories are shocking now, never mind at the time.

The books do "present difficulties", as his protean advocates in academia are prone to say coyly. There are tortuous cascades of phrases, as Faulkner attempts to capture the world in a single sentence. There are, too, his public statements on race, which have damned him in the eyes of some literature departments. In one famous remark — which he later disavowed, claiming he had been drunk — he declared: "As long as there's a middle road, all right, I'll be on it. But if it came to fighting I'd fight for Mississippi against the United States even if it meant going out into the street and shooting Negroes."

Despite those obstacles, it's worth persisting. Compared with the myth of constantly reinventing yourself which permeates so much of American culture and writing, it is salutary to be reminded, as Faulkner put it, that in his part of the country "The past is never dead. It's not even past". And if you've gone to Oxford and are, against the odds, unsatisfied, there is always Elvis, an hour down the road.

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Browne Maddox



Tony Blair's Rasputin

A vain premier and his closest courtier are in a dangerous embrace

Who is the most powerful person in Britain today? The answer is easy, the Prime Minister, the Great White Smile, the one-and-only Tony Blair. But who is the second most powerful person in Britain? Aha.

On Monday morning a cloud no bigger than a politician's promise darkened the countenance of Downing Street. It was the front page of *The Sun*, a paper to which Mr Blair puts his ear each day, believing it to be the voice of the common man, an individual otherwise absent from his schedule. The front page was brutal. Alongside a picture of Mr Blair and his colleagues, it asked, "Is this the most arrogant Cabinet in history?" A Latin grammarian would have called it a headline expecting the answer yes.

The *Sun's* outburst followed a stream of recent incidents suggesting a Government obsessed with control and frightened of dissent. Downing Street seemed unable to tolerate phenomena as diverse as democratic Labour primaries, leaks of the Lawrence inquiry, unimprisoned schizophrenics or unattended homework. Whereas centralised control was previously asserted with barely a whip's crack, trouble was bursting out all over. The inevitable whisper is doing the rounds. This would not have happened in the old days of the Prince of Darkness.

The talk is that the Prime Minister misses Peter Mandelson. He wanders the lonely corridors moaning over his ghost, like Henry II over Becket. He misses the soft murmur in the ear, the seductive beep of the pager, the reassuring morning call to give him "the day's message". Mr Mandelson's reputation blossoms over his early grave. Happy the courtier whose fall is followed by fiasco. "Every Prime Minister needs a Willie," said Margaret Thatcher of Viscount Whitelaw. Every Blair seems to need a Mandy.

The departure of Mr Mandelson has upset the power balance within Britain's most opaque political institution, Downing Street. He was close to Mr Blair, yet he was outside the Downing Street coterie, located first in the Cabinet Office then at Trade and Industry. He was thus a rival conduit of advice to that of the Press Secretary, Alastair Campbell. In Opposition, these two spin-doctors had complemented each other. Mr Mandelson the modern-

ist, Mr Campbell the old sawbones. Mr Blair was so insecure he would have Mr Campbell sit next to him during radio interviews, a comfort awarded by the BBC to no other politician. Afterwards he would be on the mobile phone to Mr Mandelson to find out "how it played". The rivalry of the two men was held in check by nothing going wrong. The question was, who would survive when the going got tough. Before the election, Mr Campbell had asked Baroness Thatcher's press officer, Sir Bernard Ingham, how he should handle Mr Mandelson if they should both find themselves in Downing Street. Sir Bernard's reply was brisk, "Split his throat."

He would have to show he was boss. This grim necessity was pre-empted by the Government's continued good fortune and by a greater rivalry, the informal "separation of powers" between Downing Street and the Treasury. This rivalry was resolved, for the time being, when Mr Blair lost Mr Mandelson and Mr Brown lost his own spin-doctor, Charlie Whelan, last Christmas.

Mr Campbell has swiftly moved to capitalise on their fall. He is now in a position of dominance over Mr Blair that alarms almost all who have dealings with Downing Street. He is far more than a press officer. His relations with both Tony and Cherie Blair, long close, now parody Rasputin's with Tsar Nicholas and Alexandra. Mr Campbell is the fearless magician who claims to be able to stem the haemorrhagic flow of bad news that is hereditary to all governments.

In this, his role is quite different from Sir Bernard Ingham's. Sir Bernard kept his place below the Cabinet staff. He did not attend ministerial meetings, was briefed by officials and acted merely as the boss's protector and mouthpiece.

He was output, never input. Mr Campbell attends Cabinet meetings, the first Downing Street press officer to do so. He even goes to defence meetings on Kosovo. He has total access to the Prime Minister and has no reticence in giving his point of view. Last month Mr Blair was involved in a Seychelles dinghy "rescue". The lobby joke was that he must have phoned Mr Campbell from the boat to ask what to do. It was no joke. He did.

All Prime Ministers have those with whom they naturally feel at ease. But even Margaret Thatcher was careful to garner advice and thus diffuse collective responsibility. She had served in difficult Cabinets herself. Mr Blair did not. He is inexperienced in executive power. He has rendered Cabinet ministers little more than agency chiefs, even stealing their more photogenic announcements for himself (especially if they involve nurses or children). Ministers are left to take the flak and deliver crudely quantified manifesto pledges. Both Frank Dobson and David Blunkett are now frantic to achieve waiting list and maths targets of ludicrous precision. British public administration is becoming a Benhamite nightmare. In which every teacher, doctor, social worker and policeman must climb a statistical league table each year or slither to ignominy.

At the centre of this web of control is Downing Street, and at its centre is Mr Campbell. With him in lonely splendour are Sir Richard Wilson, the Cabinet secretary; Jonathan Powell, whose fortunes are heavily linked to peace in Ulster; Jeremy Heywood, the Treasury's ambassador at Blair's court; and the policy chief, David Miliband. These men run Britain to a degree that no previous Downing Street team has done. They are far more than a kitchen cabinet. They are Mr Blair.

Yet accountability in government never disappears. Every actor needs an audience. Every writer needs a critic. A government may stifle its enemies, neuter its party and nobble its Parliament, but it will still crave a response. In the absence of any other, it will turn to the media, cussed, irresponsible, detested, but always ready to oblige. *Faute de mieux*, the British media have a virtual monopoly on political opposition in Britain today.

Mr Blair is emerging from the chrysalis of triumph as an odd sort of Prime Minister. Supremely charismatic, he is not intellectually tough. He is strangely mesmerised by the views of businessmen. He hates dissent. Like many leaders before him, he is bored by the details of policy but loves the surface theatricality of foreign affairs. He prefers the empty but well-turned phrase to the substantive idea. He is an advocate always in need of a brief. But nothing seems to compel him so much as his ever-changing mirror of the press. "How will it play?" he demands of a policy, long before "What should it be?"

Thus does Mr Blair find himself closeted ever more closely with Mr Campbell. Thus does Mr Campbell find himself ever more exposed to the Cabinet as the true "Deputy Prime Minister", fiercely loyal, increasingly exhausted and, as in his recent Fabian lecture, paranoid before his time. Mr Campbell's past experience is only of the incoherent world that is now the butt of his scorn, the press. He has a short fuse, a young family and too little time to himself. Mr Blair's reliance on him is total and relentless. It is surely unhealthy for both of them. They should remember who did it in Rasputin. It was those who claimed to have the Tsar's best interest at heart.

No article should need later exegesis. Last week I satirised Robin Cook's diplomacy by suggesting that Turkey's troubles with the Kurds might be next in line for his bomb-happy intervention. The irony of my argument was lost in a malicious translation, which has caused wide offence in the affairs of sovereign states, especially where they concern separatist conflicts, as innumerable articles on this page will attest.



Simon Jenkins

'I cannot call the fire brigade for help because the animal stuck in my acacia tree is a sheep'

In the centre of my back garden, some fifty feet from the house, there is a large acacia tree. Could be forty feet high: taller, certainly, than the loft in which I currently sit, staring at it. Now, while I normally sit staring at it because I do not know what to write, today is different. Today I am staring at it because I do not know what to do. Which means that today, I do at least know what to write: I shall write about what I do not know what to do about.

What I do not know what to do about is the animal which is stuck in the branches of the acacia tree. It is so stuck that it cannot come down of its own accord, and since it is halfway up the acacia tree, it is too high for my accord to be of any help to it. Yes, you are right, in such cases the normal course

is to call the fire brigade: but this case is a bit less such than that. I cannot call the fire brigade, because the animal is a sheep. You will reply that this should not be the fire brigade, we have seen *London's Burning*, there is no job too great or small for these plucky lads, they would have that sheep down in a trice — and I do not disagree. I didn't say the fire brigade couldn't do it. I said I couldn't call them.

Let me lower my stare, in your behalf, to the grassy area below the tree. See, it is not as grassy as it should be. Every year, as the tree spreads wider the lawn grows bald. But this year I decided to remedy that, which is why my lowered stare can also see that the grassless area, about a hundred square feet, is roped off and criss-crossed with twine to discourage birds from dining on the seed with which, a couple

of days ago, I sowed the baldness.

It does not, of course, discourage the birds at all. They are not mugs, birds: they have knuckled about a bit, and they have learnt that criss-crossed twine is not unlike a Michelin star, criss-crossed twine says this is a top place to eat, this is gourmet heaven, bring the family, tell your friends. No sooner had I finished criss-crossing and gone inside than a hundred square feet of beaks were ticking in. So I went outside again, waving and shouting, and they flew off and stood on the fence. After an hour or so it got dark, and we all went somewhere else.

That night, Mrs Coren suggested I stick a broom in the middle of the patch and put a hat on it. It

worked a treat: it was so much clearer than criss-crossed twine that, next morning, the clientele trebled. Birds were diving from ten thousand feet. I had sown Pearl Harbor. So since, after a couple of hours, all the fun had gone out of shouting and waving, I telephoned the garden centre where I had bought the seed. Yes, they said, that is one of the curious things about birds, despite having extremely small brains, they nevertheless have just enough IQ to know that a broom with a hat on is a broom with a hat on. What I needed, they continued, was a scarecrow that moved in the wind, such as balloons. Better yet, said Mrs Coren, as I explained why I was putting my coat on, did I remember that

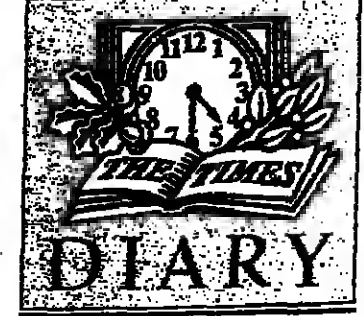
place where we used to get inflatable figures for the children's birthday parties? It was called The Non-Stop Party Shop, in Sydney Street. I think that they had inflatable cats, said Mrs Coren. Those would be just the thing.

They probably would. There is no way of knowing. Having driven from Cricklewood to Chelsea, I discovered that The Non-Stop Party Shop did not have inflatable cats. They had only one inflatable animal. Can you guess what it was? Of course you can, but can you guess why the box declared it to be The Bonking Sheep? I couldn't guess, either, but when I inflated it, I noticed that it had an office. Mrs Coren and I looked at the office for a bit, and then Mrs Coren observed that the sheep had blue eyes. She asked me if I had ever

seen a sheep with blue eyes before. I told her I didn't think so, but then again, I didn't go to many non-stop parties, these days. Do you think it'll frighten the birds off, she said, and I said I don't know, but it scares the hell out of me.

That was Monday afternoon, just before I took the sheep out into the garden and tied its front legs to two pegs, leaving its back end free to swing about in the breeze. And, do you know, it was a total success: from 2pm to nightfall, not a bird went near. But it is Tuesday morning, now, and, as you may just have guessed, the breeze went from strength to strength last night. I don't know what time the gale got up, I know only that it did not get up alone, which is why I have a blue-eyed sheep with an office in my acacia tree. Now do you understand why I can't call the fire brigade?

Alan Coren



Song of strife

THE Pet Shop Boys are threatening to sue Roger Scruton. The popsters Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe are upset about a reference to them in the philosopher's *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture*. It questions how much input they have in their records. Scruton is surprised his words should have been considered defamatory by the singers. He insists that he thinks they are brilliant studio technicians. "I am concerned if this has given offence," Scruton tells me. "A lot of my writing does and I apologise if my words are misinterpreted." Misinterpreted?

WHISKY to the general. Lord Lamont of Lerwick has sent a bottle to dear Augusto Pinochet. Norm, campaigning to get the Generalissimo home, felt he needed cheering up. When Pinochet received it, he asked: "Is Lamont a law lord? He looked glum when he learnt that Norm had only been a Chancellor."

LIZ CALDER is to be eased out of the Editor-in-Chief's chair at Bloomsbury. The grand dame of Fitzrovia fiction is to be replaced by someone more able to "pull in the young talent". Calder is editor to many heavy volumes, such as Margaret Atwood, as well as Will Self and Joanna Trollope (below). She is to be replaced by Alexandra Pringle, a literary agent of five

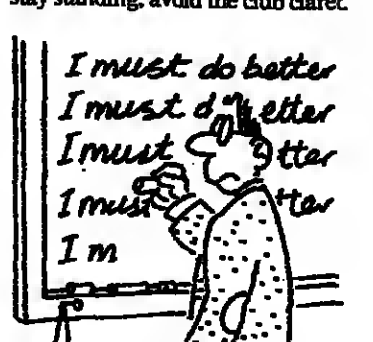


years' standing, who has also been editorial director of Virago and Hamish Hamilton. She will arrive at Bloomsbury shortly to replace Calder, a founding director, next January. "But Liz will continue to work on her own list within Bloomsbury for the foreseeable future," I am told.

LITERARY courtier. American Psycho author Bret Easton Ellis tells me he had a bit of a date with Donna Tartt. "We were both at Bennington College, Vermont," says Ellis. "Friends set us up as we both wrote. We put first chapters of our books in each other's pigeonholes. She got the first chapter of *Less Than Zero* and she sent me *A Secret History*. Then we discussed them on the date."

KEN LIVINGSTONE is gently setting aside his idealism to address a male-only gentlemen's club. The Savile, devoid of women since 1868, will be platform for Ken's mayoral bid in April.

His recent into the haunt of Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Edward Elgar is courtesy of Ilyd Harrington, his GLC chum and Savile stalwart. My advice: if you want to stay standing, avoid the club daret.



SIR JAMES SPICER has met his Churchillian hour of destiny. The ex-Tory MP plans to cap 40 years in politics — by standing for the local council. Sir Jimmy, 73, is to fight Beaminster: "I don't really want to, but I can't stand the Liberal council," he booms. "It will bang the drum for oldies."

FASHION god: Stephen Byers. The slick Trade and Industry Secretary has sashayed into London Fashion Week. "Shoes are my weakness," he tells me. "I wear trainers at weekends when I walk across the moor and I wear shorts when people might not see me. I like clothes, especially Armani, but," he adds mysteriously, "there is pressure to wear dark suits."

DURING filming of Shakespeare in Love, Joseph Fiennes fell for Gwyneth Paltrow — dressed as a boy. "She made a lot of guys doubt their sexuality. I love that confusion of love. I fear the admission is called bad box office."

JASPER GERARD

FIVE TESTS FOR EUROPE

From changeover to people's choice: *The Times* looks forward to what must change before any referendum

Yesterday in the Commons, the Prime Minister fired the starting gun for his attempt to take Britain into monetary union. In substance as well as style, this was no mere "change of gear" but the crossing of the Rubicon that Paddy Ashdown rushed to applaud. Tony Blair's desire to steer Britain into EMU is now clear. The euro, he says, is "a reality"; Britain must prepare to be part of it.

The amendments that he announced to this year's Finance and Social Security Bills require substantial public investment. They anticipate a victory in the national referendum which, the Government has promised, would follow a Cabinet decision to join. Britons are not to be asked their view before this money is spent, only afterwards. These amendments will authorise government departments to make their systems euro-compatible. The Government is thus planning on the basis that the single currency is here to stay, that it will be well managed and that Britain will be part of it. And Mr Blair has now given the lobbyists for EMU the signal they have long demanded, starting a process designed to convince voters that entry is a foregone conclusion.

Inevitability is one of the most seductive mantras of modern European politics. To go with the flow is the greatest desire of modern European politicians. To be left out of a seemingly inevitable European unification is almost the greatest fear of this consciously modern British Prime Minister.

Fortunately, Mr Blair has another fear, greater even than his fear of exclusion from the councils of those who have chosen EMU. He fears repudiation and defeat by the British electorate. He will not recommend to Britons that they give up their currency unless he is confident that the reply will be yes. Today that answer would be no.

Yesterday's statement is confirmation of his confidence that he can change public opinion. He will, however, follow the trend of that opinion with exquisite care. His decision on whether to ask voters to join will depend on when and if he judges that the majority is so persuaded. Thus, in a decision based on the constant analysis of opinion polls, millions of Britons have a responsibility to think, and to choose. Those people and institutions best able to influence public opinion have the very greatest responsibility.

The Times, which is both a British newspaper and a European newspaper, is one of those institutions. For more than two centuries we have watched the successes and failures of continental countries to seek prosperity and harmony. We have had no monopoly of wisdom. But no newspaper has surpassed us for engagement in the issues which guide the islands of Britain in their dealings with the rest of the world.

We are not, and never have been, anti-Europeans, little-Englanders, blood-and-soil nationalists or shrinkers from the risks of the unknown. Those epithets already form the charge-sheet against all opponents of Britain adopting the euro; and in some cases the use of these words may be justified. *The Times*, however, is not persuaded of the economic merits of monetary union and takes the constitutional issues more seriously than the Prime Minister appears to.

As Europeans, as internationalists, as democrats and advocates of free trade in goods and ideas, we want to see a successfully modernising, dynamic Europe open to the world. The reforming agenda for Europe that Mr Blair set out yesterday is one that we would share. He believes that this is the direction that the eurozone is taking. But in the 11 countries of the eurozone, what we see is too much of the opposite. On the long referendum road, where their every move and mood will be observed by government pollsters, the British people should be acting as sharp observers themselves, looking at the eurozone to see if this is a system to which they want to lock their fate.

The Government's policy, as set out in October 1997 and given vastly greater political impetus by the Prime Minister yesterday, can be simply summarised. "In principle", it wants to join. The "constitutional issue" is a factor but "not an overriding one". Mr Blair set it aside even more clearly yesterday, saying that "it is right for Britain to overcome these political and constitutional arguments and the fears behind them". "The economic benefits must", however, "be clear and unambiguous." The Cabinet will recommend entry only if five economic tests are met. The "first and most critical" is the durable convergence of the UK business

cycle with that of the eurozone. The second is sufficient "flexibility" to adapt to a single currency regime. The Government accepts that "unemployment and inflexibility" are problems for eurozone countries, but the emphasis is on Britain's need to tackle its own "long-term unemployment, lack of skills and in some areas lack of competition". The third is the effect on inward investment to the UK. The fourth is the impact on the City's future as Europe's leading financial centre which the Government believes would be more secure within EMU. The fifth is the effect on British jobs.

These are practical markers, concentrating on technical questions such as asymmetric business cycles. The tests are narrow even in terms of the Government's insistence, reinforced by the Prime Minister yesterday, that the decision will be based exclusively on economic considerations. And they are tests for Britain to pass, not ways of

in line with its continental neighbours.

A thriving monetary union would have a stable currency, a rate of growth as high or higher than its competitors and, after a decade of economic stagnation, a thriving jobs market in economies open to the world. For this scenario to be realised, and for unemployment to shrink at all, eurozone governments must first liberate their economies far more aggressively than they show signs of doing. Prospects that the euro will promote structural reforms in the eurozone of the kind we see as indispensable are currently slight. The trend, as we see it — and as Oskar Lafontaine and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the German and French finance ministers driving the eurozone agenda, describe it — points the other way.

The euro-II governments have demanded much sacrifice from their publics as they squeezed economies into conformity with the Maastricht criteria. Most have neglected supply-side reforms. These will now be politically tougher to put in place: voters have been told to expect a euro-dividend in jobs, not further painful adjustments and initial job losses. The eurozone is not an "optimal currency area" where labour moves freely between broadly compatible economies. Germany's overall labour costs are four times those in Portugal and more than a third higher than Italy's — and Britain's. Low-cost, high-unemployment countries such as Spain will have every incentive to make the most of these cost differentials.

There will therefore be a temptation, to which Germany and France are already succumbing, to demand tax, social security and wage harmonisation to protect them against "social dumping". This will be severely counter-productive. If Britain were to join monetary union, the risk is that, far from increasing its influence for change, membership would put Britain under irresistible pressure to dismantle this country's hard-won reforms of the past two decades.

A further cause for concern is the eurozone's design faults, notably the insulation of the European Central Bank from political accountability and its exclusive concern with price stability. These increase the risks that a one-size-fits-all monetary policy will be needlessly deflationary.

"Convergence" with stagnant, unreformed economies would be an historic error. So far, Britain and its European partners seem to us to be marching to the sound of different drums. We prefer the British beat, not for narrow nationalist reasons but because it strikes a more distinctively modern note. We see no gain in being yoked to economic creeds outworn, nor do we think that this would benefit the EU any more than it would benefit Britain.

We would, finally, need to be persuaded on the constitutional issues which, whatever Mr Blair affects to believe, have not been resolved. The importance to democracy of political accountability cannot lightly be dismissed. The EU's democratic deficit, wide enough already, gaps wider still under monetary union.

British politicians, though not British voters, have always been reluctant to acknowledge the political dimensions of the EU. Their continental partners, more realistic, believe that this democratic deficit will be bridged only by a pan-European government. The single currency, as many of them now openly say, requires one.

But such a government of all Europe is not inevitable — particularly if Britain stays out of the eurozone. We see the possibility of a far safer and healthier alternative, one that will keep government close to the governed and be more compatible with an enlarged Union.

Britain's membership of the EU is a settled fact. Outside or inside EMU, it will have powerful political influence. It should use this influence to encourage the EU to work with the grain of Europe's immense diversity. Only thus can the experiment of European Union be compatible with the pull of national loyalties. The cause of European integration is not best served by the notion that all countries must march in lock-step. For historical reasons, some EU countries genuinely desire political integration. They should be able to go ahead, provided that nations not sharing that desire do not have to join them.

Flexibility is the key to harmony and prosperity in Europe. That is the strategic prize which every British voter should keep in mind when an inflexible future is being represented, increasingly and ever more shrilly represented, as an inevitable one.

THE FIVE TESTS

Before serious debate can begin about the balance between EMU's economic advantages and constitutional costs, the eurozone needs to undergo substantial economic and political change.

● The "European social model" with its low growth, high taxes and huge unemployment must give way to one that is more dynamic and competitive. Signs of this will be dramatically reduced state intervention, elimination of subsidies, reform of welfare disincentives and unfunded pensions systems and much smaller public payrolls. Government spending, adjusted for accelerated privatisation, must be cut to 45 per cent or less of GDP, enabling steep cuts in taxation.

● Flexible labour markets must show consistently high levels of employment. That will require visible reform of restrictive labour laws and other non-competitive practices, sharply reduced non-wage labour costs and open markets in government procurement. A key part of this test will be a steep and sustainable fall in eurozone unemployment, currently averaging 10.8 per cent, to around British levels, with strong private sector growth in jobs.

● The single currency must be a manifest and sustained success. It must work smoothly to the benefit of all its members and command popular support. To avoid social unrest, a rise in nationalism or a political backlash against the EU itself, the gains must be seen by a clear majority of Europe's voters to outweigh the pain of economic adjustment and the diminution of democratic controls. The eurozone must begin to demonstrate that it can ride out recessions and shocks that affect some member states more than others: by the expected referendum date of 2002, this vital criterion is unlikely to be measurable by any solid objective test.

● The constitution of the European Central Bank must be radically reformed. The ECB is now the most powerful public institution in Europe but it is not responsible to any elected body. It operates in secret, refuses to disclose its voting records, sets its own targets and acts as judge and jury of its own performance. Its officials cannot be dismissed, disciplined or censured by any government or elected body. The ECB's objectives must be revised, to charge it with avoiding deflation as well as inflation. Its adversarial relationship with Europe's elected governments, already causing major political clashes in Europe, must be clarified. Making the ECB's constitution compatible with democracy and economic reality will require amendments to the Maastricht treaty.

● Monetary union must prove workable without a drive to European political union. Key parts of this test will be the retention of national sovereignty in fiscal policies, including corporate taxation and taxes on savings, with the veto preserved and no extension of collective decision-making in this domain. The drive to harmonise or "co-ordinate" national laws, whether directly in EU councils or indirectly, through recourse by the Commission to social chapter, health and safety or single market provisions, must be halted. Both politically and economically, the eurozone must be outward-looking; monetary union must not be an obstacle to EU enlargement.

measuring what would make the eurozone irresistibly attractive.

We believe that tests are needed on the other side too: tests that the single currency area must pass before debate can be joined about whether it could conceivably make sense for Britain to be part of it. These tests must be met before the Government should even consider putting membership to a referendum.

To list them indicates the distance to be travelled. Much of Europe still awaits its modernising revolution. In terms of labour costs, welfare bills, bankrupt pension funds, state subsidies and government spending, taxation and unemployment, the eurozone needs to change in fundamental ways. When these changes have been clearly seen to happen, Europe will indeed be "going British way", making possible a rational assessment of the "success" of the single currency and a properly based debate on whether this country should take an irreversible step to stay

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9NN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Prospects for the police after accusation of racism

From the Chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales

Sir, I am confident that all police officers will recognise the gravity of the issues dealt with in the Macpherson report (details, February 22 and 23). This organisation speaks on behalf of all officers in England and Wales below the rank of superintendent.

The overwhelming majority of those officers have feelings of deep sadness and regret over the events surrounding the murder of Stephen Lawrence. There has been a tragic miscarriage of justice, due almost entirely to the mistakes made during the murder investigation. In their dealings with the Lawrence family, some officers may have been insensitive. But there can be no justification for a blanket allegation that the police did not care about this murder because the victim was black.

I have no wish to understate the real problems of racism in the police service. However, I cannot accept that the report is right to conclude that the Metropolitan Police (or any other police force in Britain) is riven by "pernicious and institutionalised racism". Sir William Macpherson of Cluny defines this as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin". Collective implies that responsibility for this failure applies across the board.

This is grossly unfair. It ignores the work put in day after day by the great majority of police officers who strive to uphold their oath of office, to act without fear or favour towards all members of the community. If there are failings in policies and operational strategies, they are faults of leadership and management among those who take these decisions, be they legislators or chief officers.

The Police Federation accepts that the story of training police officers in race relations is one of good intentions overridden by operational priorities and inadequate resources.

In spite of several working parties and reports that have identified the problems and laid down principles and training programmes, there has been a massive failure to implement agreed criteria.

The self-confidence of the police has been seriously undermined and unless it is restored, and quickly, the long-term consequences for police and the public could be very damaging. Perhaps now the Home Secretary, all chief officers and police authorities will act.

Yours faithfully,
FRED BROUGHTON,
Chairman,
Police Federation of
England and Wales,
15-17 Langley Road,
Surrey, Surrey KT6 6LP,
February 23.

From Mr Lawrence T. Roach

Sir, The anti-racist credentials of Sir Paul Condon are beyond dispute. His Metropolitan Police service has a highly creditable record of efforts to eradicate racism from its ranks. Changing such deep-rooted attitudes is normally the work of generations.

To condemn him and his officers now for failing to transform the Metropolitan Police in the relatively short time he has had in his post is surely both ill-considered and unjust.

Yours faithfully,
LAWRENCE T. ROACH,
43 Ripon Way,
Borehamwood,
Hertfordshire WD6 2HY,
February 23.

From Mr Simon Hughes, MP for North Southwark and Bermondsey (Liberal Democrat)

Sir, No effort must be spared to eliminate racism from all our public services but, above all, our police. We must be vigilant, however, not to turn accountability into scapegoating leading to a new racism.

Sir Paul Condon took over the Metropolitan Police a matter of weeks before Stephen Lawrence was killed. If it was racist at that time, the fault must lie chiefly with his predecessors. Since 1993, however much there is to do, things have significantly improved.

Fingers should not be pointed at successive Metropolitan Police Commissioners without being pointed also at the Metropolitan Police authorities — namely the Home Secretaries. If the last Government had transferred responsibility for the Metropolitan Police away from the Home Office to people directly accountable to Londoners (as Liberal Democrats have always argued and this Government is now doing), racism in the police service would almost certainly have been tackled much more quickly.

The most constructive way forward from this week should entail the most determined effort to recruit black and Asian graduates to our public services, in particular to the police, and a much greater commitment to providing the police with the resources for the personnel and the technology they need to investigate crime in London.

Yours sincerely,
SIMON HUGHES
(Liberal Democrat)
London Spokesman,
House of Commons,
February 23.

'Kneejerk' injunction on press

From the Director of the Guild of Editors

Sir, It is little wonder that editors who are usually in fierce competition were united in their condemnation of the Home Secretary's injunction against *The Sunday Telegraph* (reports, February 22).

For years Labour has promised a Freedom of Information Act. After the 1997 election its pledges were strengthened. Such an Act was described as a cornerstone of constitutional reform yet Mr Straw is believed to be in favour of watering down its provisions, particularly with regard to the police (report, January 12).

The media still face threats from the Human Rights Act; organisations are hiding behind the new Data Protection Act, and the Youth Justice Bill could mean a generation vanishing from newspaper pages and TV screens. Mr Straw's injunction was a kneejerk reaction in the direction of secrecy when he should be leaning towards greater openness. So much for fine words.

Yours sincerely,
BOB SATCHWELL,
Director, Guild of Editors,
University Centre, Granta Place,
Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RU,
February 22.

From Dr Kenneth MacRAE

Sir, In whose interest was it for *The Sunday Telegraph* to attempt to publish excerpts from Sir William Macpherson's inquiry on Sunday when the report of the inquiry is to be published in full on Wednesday, once the interested parties, the Lawrence family and the Metropolitan Police have had an opportunity to read it in its entirety? *The Sunday Telegraph's*, of course.

This, alas, is yet another example of the press acting in its own selfish commercial interest, behaving more as part of the entertainment industry than a responsible guardian of the public interest. The almost universal support for *The Sunday Telegraph's* actions elsewhere in the press clearly suggest that the interests of those affected by this inquiry are regarded as secondary to increased sales of newspapers.

A free press is a fundamental part of a free society, and it is sad to see such irresponsible behaviour by one newspaper being supported by so many others.

Yours faithfully,
KENNETH MACRAE,
5 Northcroft Terrace, W13 9SP,
February 22.

White Paper waffle

From Field Marshal Lord Carver

Sir, I have now read the Government's White Paper, *Modernising Parliament: Reforming the House of Lords*. I cannot recall ever having read a paper which repeated itself so often and said so little in so many words.

I suggest that some literary or educational establishment should offer a prize for a version which says all that is essential to the paper in the shortest span.

The Stationery Office should then cost it in comparison with the 51 pages of the White Paper's glossy waffle for which they charge £8.20.

Yours truly,
CARVER,
House of Lords,
February 19.

Still fizzing

From Mr Barry Hyman

Sir, Contrary to your Weekend item, "The drinks that time forgot — Soda-stream" (February 20), mine is still going strong. I won it from the maker in a slogan competition a decade ago, and it replaced the one I had acquired at a jumble sale. In the summer there is nothing better than a personally over-fizzed, bright-green, ice-cold "Bertie's" (sugar-free regrettably) Limeade concentrate.

Generously unmodified and free from BSE, CJD, listeria, E.coli and salmonella, my Soda-stream still has its old spot in our new kitchen.

Yours etc,
BARRY HYMAN,
4 Priory View, Bushey Heath,
Hertfordshire WD23 3QZ,
February 20.

Return of the Marbles

From Mr G. A. Lemos

Sir, I applaud Mr Michael Goldman's suggestion (letter, February 20) that high-quality facsimiles of the Elgin Marbles should be juxtaposed with the originals and the Greeks invited to select between them, from a distance of five metres. However, I propose that Greek schoolchildren should make the choice, rather than "senior representatives of the Greek Government".

The pieces chosen should then be exhibited at the British School of Archaeology in Athens, as a deserved tribute to the scholars who have contributed so much to the Greek sense of cultural identity. It would only remain for copies to be made of the pieces still in Athens and for the

trustees of the British Museum to choose between them. Thus you would get truly "cultural" Olympics, in 2004, in which I would place my drachmas (or euros by then) on the Greek schoolchildren.

Yours truly,
G. A. LEMOS,
(Member, British Greek Cultural Friendship Association),
8 Orchard Court,
Portman Square, W1H 9PA,
marbles@parthenon.demon.co.uk

From Mr David Townley

Sir, Mr Alf Lomas, MEP (letter, February 20), who suggests that your leading article of February 19 contained the "usual hoary old nationalist arguments", is guilty of calling the kettle black.

What is the Greek demand for the return of the Elgin Marbles other than nationalism? As an enthusiastic supporter of the European state, Greece should be indifferent to where in Europe her treasures rest.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID TOWNLEY,
92 Fir Tree Road,
Banstead, Surrey SM7 1NQ,
February 20.

Jenkins and Turkey

From Mr Altunur Kilic

Sir, As a long-time reader of *The Times* and of Mr Simon Jenkins, I am aware of his rather biting and sarcastic style and sense of humour.

I therefore can discern that the main target of his column on February 19 was Mr Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, and not Turkey and the Turkish people. But please realise that many of my sensitive compatriots will take his article of February 19, "The Kurd instinct", as an attack on Turks and Turkey (see also letter, February 22).

It is all right for Mr Jenkins to attack Western hypocrisy over Kosovo, but he is ill-advised to do so in relation to Turkey at a very sensitive time for our country, even though the same hypocrisy is being shown towards the Kurdish problem after the capture of a terrorist who has the blood of more than 30,000 Turks and Kurds on his hands.

Yours sincerely,
ALTUNUR KILIC
(Columnist, *Türkiye*),
Dogru Muvakkit Sokak,
No 23 Emirgan,
Istanbul 80650,
February 22.

Arsenal's 'fair play'

From Mr Clive Hughes

Sir, Mr Simon Carne (letter, February 17) is incorrect in stating that a referee may not stop a game for unsporting behaviour.

Law 12 of the *Laws of the Game* states that "a player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if... he is guilty of unsporting behaviour". The same law also explains that an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any offence where play is stopped to caution a player.

There was no need, therefore, for the referee of the February 13 match between Arsenal and Sheffield United to have waited until the ball was out of play, if, in the heat before stopping the game.

If he had acted immediately then the debate regarding "fair play" need never have started.

Yours faithfully,
CLIVE HUGHES,
57 Blain Cwm,
Llandudno,
Conwy LL30 1LE,
clivehughes@arsenal.fc.net
February 17.

A victory for rugby

From Mr John Willcox-Jones

Sir, The Scots now believe they should have beaten the English, although the English do not think they beat the Scots well enough.

The Welsh nearly beat the Irish, who feel they should also have beaten the French (reports, Sport, February 22). Meanwhile the French just smile — at least for a few more weekends.

Raw nationalism prevails with millions following the battles. There are many sore heads the following day, but nobody gets killed — the beauty of the Five Nations is, thank goodness, well and truly with us again.

Now bring on the Italians!

Yours faithfully,
JOHN WILLCOX-JONES,
La Haye,
Reading Road, Cholsey,
Oxfordshire OX10 9HG,
100106.360@compuserve.com
February 21.

John Willcox-Jones

NEWS

Blair begins battle for the euro

Tony Blair yesterday set Britain on a course that could see the end of sterling within five years. He prepared the stage for one of the biggest political battles of the century by launching a 30-month campaign to persuade the country that it should enter the European single currency. In a marked shift of gear, the Prime Minister gave business the signal of the Government's intent to take Britain into the euro if the economic conditions are right. Pages 1, 10, 11

Seven die in Austrian avalanche

A huge avalanche swept through an Austrian ski resort, killing at least seven people and burying up to 40 others beneath thousands of tons of snow. Rescuers in the Tyrolean community of Galtür were frantically trying to reach the trapped as darkness fell. Several were pulled out alive. Pages 1, 4

Lawrences set to sue

The family of Stephen Lawrence is expected to launch a civil action for damages against the Metropolitan Police. Pages 1, 5

MP leaked arms file

The arms-to-Africa affair dealt another blow to Robin Cook when a Labour MP on the inquiry committee resigned after admitting he had leaked a copy of its findings to the Foreign Secretary. Page 2

Colonials honoured

The courage of millions of soldiers from India, Africa and the Caribbean who volunteered to fight for the British Empire will be saluted with commemorative gates to be erected beside Buckingham Palace. Page 3

Mother 'left on floor'

A woman who left her mother lying on the floor for a week after she collapsed appeared in court yesterday charged with manslaughter. Page 6

Profiler stalked

Professor David Canter, one of Britain's leading criminal psychologists, told a court of a campaign of harassment from his former secretary, who threatened to destroy his career. Page 7

Aged home tragedy

Two retired doctors lost the will to live after being told that the Red Cross residential home they had founded 50 years ago was to close, relatives said. Page 7

Denim no longer fits the legend

Jeans, once the uniform of youth, are now a badge of middle age — and London Fashion Week provides clear evidence that among the fashionable, denim is dead. As Levi Strauss closed half its factories and axed 6,000 jobs after sales slumps this week, the only jeans wearers at the shows were overweight techies and forty-something men with balding heads. Page 9

Voters back high tax

A Labour council is to raise council tax by more than twice the maximum recommended by the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott after winning the approval of its voters. Page 8

Library strike likely

Book delivery staff at the British Library have voted for a strike which would close most reading rooms. Page 8

Ceasefire ignored

Kosovo, technically, slumbers under a ceasefire that is supposed to last during Rambouillet negotiations. On Monday, however, a Serb offensive displaced more than 4,000 refugees. Page 14

Ocalan faces judges

Just over a week after he was captured in Nairobi, Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish separatist leader, made his first appearance before Turkish judges to be charged with treason. Page 15

UN under fire

American spies planted on a United Nations inspection team in Iraq may have had a hand in a failed military rebellion against Saddam Hussein, according to Scott Ritter, the former UN weapons monitor. Page 15

Bush for President

At least half of America's Republican governors are ready to endorse the White House ambitions of George W. Bush. Page 16



Sixty-three MPs lost 324lb and gained £8.17 for Save The Children when the Commons Speaker Betty Boothroyd, left, and Weight Watchers' Julie Jameson put Westminster on a diet. Top of the class were (L-R) Menzies Campbell (41lb) Oliver Heald (28.5lb) and Harry Barnes (24.5lb)

Bank warning

The Governor of the Bank of England warned the Government that there was "potential for conflict" if it forced the bank to converge British and European interest rates in preparation for EMU membership. Page 25

Special dividend

Unilever announced a £5 billion special dividend to shareholders. Page 25

Miss Attitude

Reuben Singh, the 22-year-old businessman who founded the Miss Attitude retail chain, has sold out for an estimated £22 million. Page 25

Markets

The FTSE 100 index rose 85.3 points to 6155.2. The pound fell 1.16 cents to \$1.6111 and also dropped 0.18p against the euro to 68.16p. The sterling index fell to 101.6 from 101.9. Page 28

Motor racing

Eddie Jordan, the owner of the Jordan Formula One team, has warned Damon Hill that he must improve his performance in the coming season or risk being dropped. Page 48

Racing

Bint Allayl, the favourite for the 1,000 Guineas, has been put down after suffering a leg fracture on the gallops. Page 43

Rugby union

Francis Baron, the chief executive of the Rugby Football Union, has launched a devastating attack on the way the sport has been run since the beginning of the professional era. Page 46

Golf

Nick Faldo is thrown into direct conflict with the American Tiger Woods in the Andersen World Match Play event which begins today in California. Page 46

Stepping out

Irek Mukhamedov turns 39 next week. Yet far from hanging up his ballet slippers, the Russian star is about to be handed a new full-length role, that of Don Juan. Page 36

Lukewarm love

Didy Veldman's new staging of *Carmen* for Northern Ballet Theatre has so much going for it that it's a shame there isn't more full-blooded passion to drive the ballet. Page 36

Female trio

The three women of the Nualas bring a deadpan delivery and a little irony to the stage in their new show at London's Drill Hall. Page 37

French art

Paris celebrates the genius of Mark Rothko and David Hockney in two exhibitions that are well worth a visit. Page 38

TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

FILMS

Sean Penn, left, stars in Terrence Malick's long-awaited drama, *The Thin Red Line*

BOOKS

Psychology of cyberspace: *The Net as Heaven, Hell & Purgatory* — all in one



Allen patient

"Patience is alien to me. If I were patient, I would not be a journalist on a daily newspaper: I would be writing a long and worthy book." Mary Ann Sieghart on why she is unwell. Page 17

Nigel Hawkes

Did a forgotten astronomer discover the planet Uranus? Plus, the dangers of iodine deficiency. Page 18

Higher ground

Despite his huge success, Tommy Hilf craves higher recognition. Page 19

Public art

How sculpture is figuring in the plans of property developers. Page 34

South Korea

Can this Asian tiger spring back after the blow of the 1997 financial crisis? Pages 39-41

Nothing more aptly captures

the flaws of the Kosovo negotiations than the news of Nato's supreme commander meeting with negotiators a half-hour's drive from the main talks. Nato is supposed to enforce any peace agreement that is achieved. But due to European arrogance and American weakness, General Wesley Clark and his officers have not been admitted to the talks. It's no wonder that Kosovo independence fighters, asked to surrender their arms in exchange for Nato protection, are reluctant. *The Washington Post*

Preview: Failing family shoe business gambles on making kinky boots for men. *Trouble at the Top* (BBC2, 9.50pm) Review: "At times it was like listening to a precocious child who thinks he's impressing the world by using needlessly long words." Joe Joseph on *Queer as Folk*. Pages 46, 47

Five tests for euro

Flexibility is the key to harmony and prosperity in Europe. That is the strategic prize which every British voter should keep in mind when an inflexible future is being represented, increasingly and ever more shrilly represented, as an inevitable one. Page 21

MATTHEW PARRIS

This will be a battle royal. Few can have watched yesterday's clash in the Commons over the euro without thrilling to a sense of political history. Page 1

PETER RIDDELL

As Mr Heseltine urged, Mr Blair has to take a lead in what will be a cross-party campaign. He has picked up the euro standard, even if he is not yet waving it. Page 11

SIMON JENKINS

The talk is that the Prime Minister misses Peter Mandelson. He wanders the lonely corridors mooting over his ghost, like Henry II over Becket. Page 20

BRONWEN MADDOX

Faulkner's writing goes to the heart of the preoccupations which made the South very separate from the rest of the country — and sometimes still do. Page 20

ALAN COREN

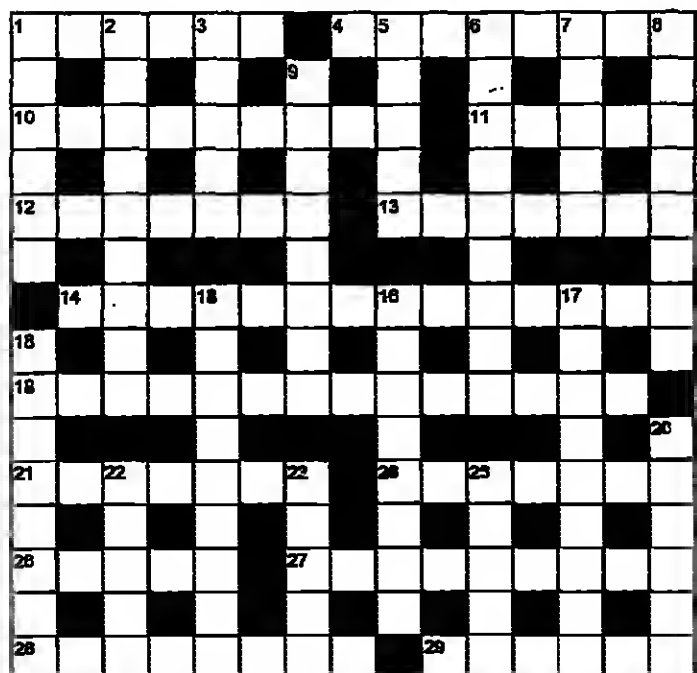
What I do not know what to do about is the animal which is stuck in the branches of the acacia tree. It has been stuck there for some hours. Page 20

Kathleen Nott, critic and novelist

Professor T. J. Saunders, Professor of Greek at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne; Johnnie Johnson, journalist; William Serways, administrator. Page 23

Prospects for police after accusation of racism: Straw's press injunction: Simon Jenkins and Turkey: Arsenal's 'fair play': White Paper: Elgin Marbles: rugby. Page 21

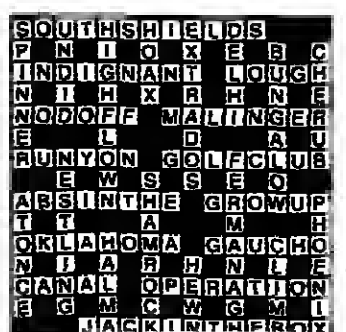
THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 21,035



ACROSS

- 1 Giving publicity to one boxing? (6)
- 4 No longer keen on pure cream (3-5)
- 10 Such trees are barely recognisable in winter (9)
- 11 Tobacco fraud (5)
- 12 Cutlery in military store (7)
- 13 There are two points he can possibly raise (7)
- 14 Nick's lawyer? (6,8)
- 19 Wild flowers that aren't common (5-3-6)
- 21 Senior accountant's holiday spot (7)
- 24 Composer goes to court for judgement (7)
- 26 Oil producer under pressure has a heart of stone (5)

Solution to Puzzle No 21,034



DOWN

- 2 One habitually taking things did wrong in law (6)
- 3 A spinner of yarn can — true or false? (9)
- 5 A touching reminder (5)
- 6 American in charge of the match (5)
- 8 Guard what one says — a good maxim (9)
- 7 Nine getting half ration — he got revolutionary punishment (5)
- 9 Well held! (8)
- 10 Absconding child makes mischief (6-2)
- 15 Rebellious against authority, gets run in, perhaps (9)
- 16 Release a shipment (8)
- 17 Blend of main races (9)
- 18 Well-known line in footwear (8)
- 20 Be there at the start and finish (6)
- 22 Pot roast? (5)
- 23 Played first part of hymn in a modern recording (5)
- 25 Check key in, as a rule (5)

Times Two Crossword, page 48

Lowest Rain and Weather conditions

UK Weather - All regions. 0330 444 910
UK Weather - All regions. 0330 444 910

Weather by Fax

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

World City Weather

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Met Office

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Car reports by fax

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Hours of Day

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Newspapers Recycling

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Double Your Tokens With

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Free Books Schools

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

General: any early rain or snow in south

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

London, SE England, Lake District, Isle of Man

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Central N & NE England: after any early

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

Channel Islands: wet start, becoming drier

0330 444 910
0330 444 910

24 hrs to 5 pm. b=brill; c=cloud; d=dizzle; ds=drizzle; f=fog; g=gale; h=hail

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Changes to the chart below from noon: low N will move southeast and fill

0330 444 910
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low 1 will move southeast and fill

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0330 444 910

always. @demon

0800 027 9199
Demon Internet

Paris pays tribute to Hockney

Arts, page 38

BUSINESS • PROPERTY • ARTS • SPORT • TELEVISION

THE TIMES

Act of pure irony

Arts, page 37

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24 1999

George fears conflict if Bank is forced to converge rates

By ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMICS
CORRESPONDENT

Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, yesterday warned the Government that there was "potential for conflict" if it forced the Bank of England to converge British and European interest rates in preparation for membership of EMU.

Mr George also told the Treasury Select Committee that there are still considerable risks to the health of the global economy with the "extraordinary buoyancy" of the US economy in particular vulnerable to a substantial slowdown.

However, the Governor rejected a claim from DeAnne Julius, an independent member of the Monetary Policy Committee who was also appearing before the committee, that the Bank may have made a mistake in raising rates during the first part of last year. He claimed that the Bank's sudden shift in policy last autumn was driven by a "pretty dramatic" deterioration abroad.



Eddie George at the committee yesterday

Mr George's comments were later echoed by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, who gave warning that although the US economy was performing "admirably" a tightening labour market and financial turmoil abroad posed big risks to US growth.

Dr Greenspan questioned whether US shares were overvalued. International stock markets, however, largely shrugged off Dr Greenspan's comments with the Dow Jones industrial average in New York holding

firm after Monday's 200-point gain. In London, the FTSE 100 recorded its second-highest closing level to date, climbing 85.3 points to 6,155.2. French and German markets also made substantial gains.

Mr George, who was speaking ahead of the publication of the Government's National Changeover Plan, left MPs in no doubt that the Government still faces formidable obstacles to joining the euro. He insisted that the Bank could find it difficult to continue to meet the Govern-

ment's inflation target if it was also obliged to reduce interest rates towards European levels.

"I would think the potential for conflict was quite high," Mr George said. Although the Bank of England has made substantial cuts in interest rates in the past few months, British rates still stand at 5.5 per cent, compared with just 3 per cent in the eurozone.

The Governor said the Bank had no plans in place for a changeover to the euro and there was "not a shred of

truth" in claims that the Bank is already trying to reduce rates to European levels. "If the Government has that objective they have not told me," Mr George said.

However, he admitted that the fact that both the Bank and the European Central Bank are pursuing policies for stable inflation should "in time bring a measure of convergence."

He said switching from the current target measure of inflation to the differently calculated European measure could

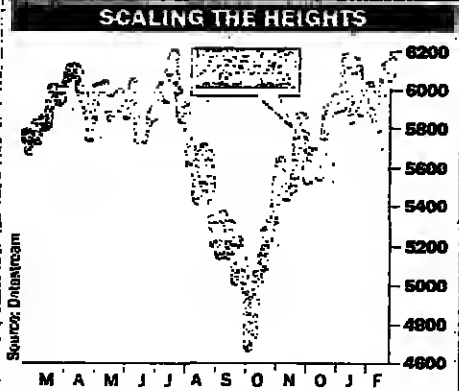
prove "intensely damaging" to the credibility of the Bank's battle against rising prices.

British inflation calculated using the European measure, which does not include items such as owner-occupied housing, stands at just 1.6 per cent compared with 2.6 per cent for the target measure and 2.4 per cent for overall inflation. Commentary, page 27

LINKS
WEBSITE: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

BRITAIN recorded its largest trade deficit for nine years in 1998 as the Asian crisis took a huge toll of export performance, data published yesterday show. The monthly data for January, also published yesterday, suggest there is no respite in sight for exporters, with the non-EU deficit hitting a new record of £2.2 billion. Across the full year, the overall trade in goods deficit ballooned from £11.6 billion to £20.6 billion.

Economic growth remained positive in the last quarter of 1998, however, despite the poor trade performance. The revised fourth-quarter GDP data showed the annual rate of growth at 1.3 per cent, compared with a previous estimate of 1.5 per cent. The quarterly rate of growth remains unchanged at 0.2 per cent. Across 1998 as a whole, growth was placed at 2.3 per cent, compared with a previous estimate of 2.5 per cent.



NatWest breaks through the £2bn barrier

By CAROLINE MERRELL
BANKING CORRESPONDENT

NATWEST brought further cheer to the upbeat British banking sector yesterday when it reported profits that broke through the £2 billion level for the first time.

Pre-tax profits for 1998 exceeded City expectations, reaching £2.1 billion against £1.75 billion for 1997, although those figures had been reduced by £706 million of losses from NatWest Markets, its former investment banking arm.

Even then the 1998 figures were dented by a £100 million provision for pensions mis-selling, relating to the second stage of the mis-selling review.

Bad debt provisions in emerging markets fell by 27 per cent, reaching £2.3 billion. Derek Wanless, chief executive, said: "We have reduced our exposure to counterparties and customers in emerging countries over the past year. We have taken £86 million of additional specific provisions in respect of customer and bank loans in Asia and Russia."

Mr Wanless did admit that the banking group's restructuring plan, which included shedding 10,000 jobs, has fallen behind schedule.

Instead of completion by next year as was planned, the restructuring will not be completed until 2001. He emphasised that the bank was continuing to bring down costs. He said: "NatWest's costs in 2000 will be lower than in 1997."

On possible acquisitions, Mr Wanless said that at present the bank preferred to concentrate on developing its own businesses.

"There are plans in place around the group in terms of each of the individual businesses to improve efficiency and effectiveness," he said.

"We have not seen anything that in our view is value from a shareholder point of view," he added.

The group proposed a final dividend of 24.2p, giving a total dividend of 30p, up 11.8 per cent on the previous year. The shares reacted positively climbing 45p to £13.19.

Tempus, page 28


Business Today

Commentary:
Not so fast, Mr Blair 27
Stock Market:
Close to record high 28
Equity prices:
Unit trusts: 33



Ready for the euro?
Single currency would put unconverted in a spin
Page 29

STOCK MARKET MOVES		
FTSE 100.....	6155.2	(+85.3)
Yield.....	2.59%	
FTSE All Share.....	2812.38	(+32.41)
Nikkei.....	14900.85	(+243.98)
New York:		
Dow Jones.....	9588.41	(+15.73)
S&P Composite.....	1275.14	(+3.00)

	US RATE		
Federal Funds	4 3/4%	(+1/4%)	
Long bond	87 1/2%	(-1/2%)	
Yield	5.42%	(-0.25%)	

LONDON MONEY		
3-min interbank....	5 1/4%	(5 1/4)%
Libor long gill		
future (Mar).....	117.86	(117.57)

STERLING		
New York:		
\$	1.5149*	11.6263
London:		

\$	1.8113	(1.6227)
£	1.4674	(1.4707)
SFr	2.3391	(2.3526)
Yen	195.28	(195.25)
E index	701.6	(701.9)

NORTH SEA OIL	Brackley (May)	\$11.05	(+0.75)
Gold	London close	\$287.45	(+0.25)
Exchange rates			

Unilever to give 'no use' £5bn to shareholders

By CARL MORTIMER, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

UNILEVER, the Anglo-Dutch food and soap company, launched the largest cash return to shareholders yesterday in the form of a £5 billion special dividend. Niall FitzGerald, Unilever's chief executive, admitted that the company had no use for the cash which amounts to 10 per cent of the total market value of the company.

The payout, which amounts to 66.13p per share, is almost equal to the £4.7 billion proceeds of the sale to ICI of the

and we have looked very carefully at target companies. We believe that the values attached to many businesses are excessive. It is not sustainable."

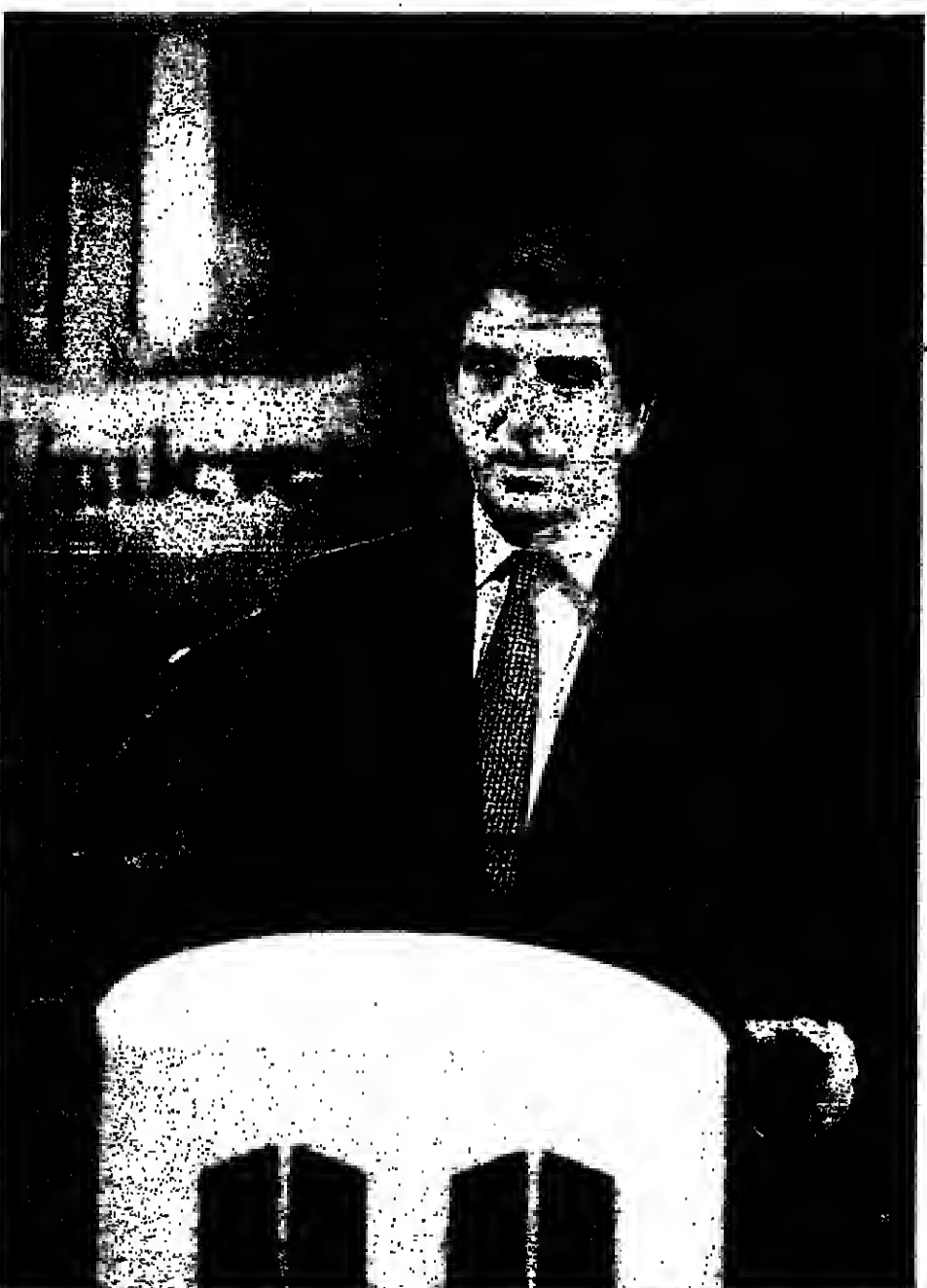
Unilever's mammoth cash handout came as the company revealed a pre-tax profit, at constant exchange rates and excluding disposals, of £3.3 billion, an increase of 41 per cent over 1997. Operating margins moved into double digits and the total ordinary dividend is increased by 27 per to 10.7p.

The company managed just 1 per cent sales growth in Europe due to the cool summer which hurt ice-cream sales but the company has restored Persil to lead position in the UK thanks to the success of its new laundry tablet. Unilever's US profits gained 14 per cent with strong growth in food and personal care products but the Asian crisis forced the company to sacrifice growth to protect margins and market shares.

Unilever's cash distribution will be closely scrutinised by other companies, including Royal Dutch/Shell which has struggled to find a tax-efficient mechanism for returning capital to shareholders. Under Dutch law, taxpaying shareholders could suffer a levy of up to 60 per cent on a cash handout.

Unilever's novel solution is the issue of a preference share to Dutch taxpaying investors which will have a five-year life. However, the decision not to do a share buyback could penalise US investors who account for more than 20 per cent of Unilever. Under US rules any capital payment other than a buyback is treated as income and is therefore taxable.

Commentary, page 27
Tempus, page 28



Niall FitzGerald promised to distribute proceeds of the sale of its specialty business to investors

Singh makes £22m with Attitude

By FRASER NELSON

REUBEN SINGH, the 22-year-old businessman who founded the Miss Attitude retail chain, has sold out for an estimated £22 million. He has sold to Gary Klesch, the venture fund investor who took over the Knickerbox chain in January last year and now intends to merge the two companies.

Mr Singh, who is said to be worth £50 million, said he intends to use the money to set up his own venture capital fund which will buy media companies. He said: "I've done retail. I've been there, seen that, got the T-shirt. Now it's time for media—and if anyone has any offers, I'm here."

He opened Miss Attitude in Manchester's Arndale Centre while he was studying for his A-levels four years ago. It now has 40 outlets in the UK, and last made a profit of £1.5 million.

The exact value of the deal has not been disclosed, but Mr Singh said he "would not have picked up the phone" to Mr Klesch if he had offered the £8 million price tag City analysts were suggesting.

Mr Singh is a director of six other companies, and runs most of them with his 20-year-old brother Bobby. Mr Klesch runs Klesch Capital Partners, which buys distressed companies cheaply and restores them to financial health. He has bought Miss Attitude to help to turn round Knickerbox.

BSkyB opens talks with Canal

By RAYMOND SNOODY
MEDIA EDITOR

BSKYB, the satellite television group, has opened exploratory talks with Canal Plus, Europe's largest subscription television company.

While talks are believed to be at an early stage, looking at a wide range of options, they are understood potentially to include a full £14 billion merger

of the two companies. Together, the two groups would be the dominant pay-TV player in Europe in terms of scale although they do not compete directly in any market.

BSkyB, in which News International, the owner of The Times, has a 40 per cent stake, is based wholly in the UK and Republic of Ireland. Previous attempts to break into continental Europe, particularly in

Germany, have come to nothing. Yesterday BSKYB shares rose by 3.5 per cent to close at 536p, up 18p.

BSkyB declined to comment last night but Canal Plus, which has a total of 11 million subscribers in Europe, acknowledged that there had been talks. Any merger would inevitably attract close scrutiny from Brussels. Competition Commissioner Karel

van Miert has taken a particular interest in issues of dominance in new media.

A merger would also involve football and sports rights issues. BSKYB has made a recommended £563 million offer for Manchester United, which is being investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Canal Plus owns a top French club, Paris St Germain.

Internet share frenzy fails to interest Gates

FROM OLIVER AUGUST
IN NEW YORK

BILL GATES, the world's richest man, invests none of his money in Internet stocks and instead sticks to much safer government and corporate bonds.

The Microsoft founder, who is worth close to \$100 billion (£62 billion) owns \$10 billion in bonds and only \$500 million in shares. Another \$1 billion of his vast fortune is invest-

ed in private ventures such as property deals.

The biggest part of his wealth is still tied up at his software company. He owns a 20 per cent stake in the \$400 billion business. But for several years, Mr Gates has been selling Microsoft shares to diversify his investments.

The fund manager he picked to carry out his investing is Michael Larson, a complete unknown until now. Mr Larson, 39, has a complete discre-

tion over Mr Gates's fortune, making him possibly the single most powerful investor on Wall Street.

There are only two hedge funds that are bigger in America, Soros and Tiger Management, both of which employ hundreds of people. Mr Larson was hand-picked by Mr Gates after a careful interview process during which Mr Gates checked each one of Mr Larson's 13 references.

His title is chief investment officer of a company called BGI—Bill Gates Investments. Mr Gates and Mr Larson hold meetings every six weeks and discuss investment ideas and market conditions by e-mail.

The Microsoft founder does not interfere directly with Mr Larson's decisions or the timing of his buying and selling.

Last year the fund manager justified his position as banker to the world's richest man by outperforming the Dow Jones industrial average rise of 17 per cent.

In his first ever interview, he told Fortune magazine about a number of his investments.

He holds short-term government bonds as well as some junk bonds and emerging market debt. In the equity part of the portfolio he holds telecommunications companies Liberty Media, TCI, Cox and USA Networks. He also owns a stake in Berkshire Hathaway, the investment company of Warren Buffett, a friend of Mr Gates.

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Warning on profit hits OAI

Shares in Oxford Asymmetry International (OAI) fell more than 10 per cent as the fast-growing supplier of chemicals to the pharmaceutical industry warned investors that it expects flat profits this year.

OAI shares fell back to 499p from 558p yesterday. Sales, up 47 per cent to £14.9 million last year, are increasing rapidly, but the company is experiencing a number of growing pains.

Merant decline

Merant, the software solutions company, reported net profit at \$5.2 million (£3.2 million) for the three months to January 31 (\$10.8 million). The shares rose 5p to 146p. Revenues were \$95.7 million (\$100.9 million). Earnings per share were 4 cents (7 cents).

Pearson

We have been asked to point out that the Exel business that Pearson has sold to Primark for £19 million does not include Ex-share, which generates about 75 per cent of revenues of the Exel business Pearson acquired in 1994.

EXCHANGE RATES

Bank	Bank
Australia \$	1.52
Austria Sch	13.76
Belgium Fr	66.63
Canada C\$	0.69
Cypriot C\$	0.006
Denmark Kr	6.46
East	10.33
Finland Mk	5.94
France Fr	16.66
Germany DM	1.93
Greece Dr	340.75
Hong Kong \$	7.75
India Ru	47.50
Indonesia Rp	1,700
Italy Lit	2,036
Japan Yen	107.15
Malta Lm	0.000
Netherlands Gld	3.60
New Zealand \$	1.34
Norway Kr	13.33
Portugal Esc	200.48
S Africa R	10.68
Spain Ptas	166.64
Sweden Kr	10.33
Switzerland Fr	2.00
Taiwan Nt\$	36.72
UK £	1.00

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Wimpey sets strong growth targets as profit rises 35%

By ROBERT COLE
CITY CORRESPONDENT

GEORGE WIMPEY, the housebuilder, has set itself ambitious targets to lift UK revenues by 50 per cent over the next five years and to double US revenues.

The targets were set out as Wimpey reported a 35 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £85 million in 1998 (£63.1 million).

Yesterday's results were the last to be delivered by Joe Dwyer, Wimpey's long-serving chairman. Executive con-

trol of the group is passing to Dennis Brant, chief executive. He said he wanted to see the operating profit margins in one of its two UK housing companies — called Wimpey Homes — rise from 7.8 per cent to at least 10 per cent in two years. Last year margins in that segment widened 16 per cent to 6.7 per cent.

Wimpey's second UK division, McLean Homes, already has operating profit margins of 11.4 per cent. Mr Brant said he wanted to maintain these margins. Wimpey is also pre-

paring to extend its US operations, which trades as Morrison Homes, by opening three new sales offices in Florida.

Helped by the release of US tax losses from previous years, Wimpey's earnings grew 46 per cent to 17.6p a share in the year just ended. The final dividend is 3.9p, making 6p for the year (5.7p). The shares rose 24p to 133p yesterday.

Beazer, a rival housebuilder, also unveiled financial results yesterday. But in stark contrast to the strength shown by Wimpey, Beazer reported a

15 per cent decline in profits, blaming delays in several planning applications for the fall.

Beazer earned £26.6 million in the six months to December 31 (£31.4 million). The planning delays meant Beazer had fewer completed properties available for sale. It also increased the amount of money Beazer had tied up in working capital.

However, Dennis Webb, chief executive, insisted that the planning problems had only delayed building work and left the company in better shape for the future.

Both Wimpey and Beazer reported that their average selling prices increased, but attributed the rises to a change in the mix of properties sold, rather than because of any substantial growth in comparable selling prices.

Both firms are selling more bigger houses.

Earnings at Beazer declined 16 per cent to 6.7p a share. The interim dividend, however, was lifted 9 per cent to 2.5p. The shares fell 24p to 160p.

Tempus, page 28

War chest at Irish Permanent

By RICHARD MILES

IRISH PERMANENT, which has agreed a merger with Irish Life to form the Republic's third-largest financial services company, said yesterday it had a war chest of more than £300 million (£260 million) to spend on acquisitions.

Reporting a 21 per cent rise in 1998 pre-tax profits to £66.7 million, Roy Douglas, chief executive, said the group could spend between £300 million and £400 million on a deal. He also confirmed interest in buying the state-owned ICC Bank, likely to be privatised later this year.

Permanent, the country's top mortgage lender, said it expected to complete its £2.8 billion merger with Irish Life by the end of April, bringing it closer to market leaders Allied Irish Banks and the Bank of Ireland.

The company said total new lending in 1998 leapt 38 per cent to £11.5 billion. Net interest margins improved, as did its other income revenues. Cost-income ratio fell to 51.5 per cent from 54.8 per cent. Permanent will pay a total dividend of £19.5p per share, a rise of 13.4 per cent.



John Randall leaves with a £454,000 payoff package. He had been at MFI for 20 years

Randall ousted at MFI

JOHN RANDALL has been ousted as chief executive of MFI, leaving the company after 20 years with a £454,000 payoff package. His departure was announced as the troubled furniture retailer issued another profits warning.

Derek Hunt, chairman, told Mr Randall that the board had lost confidence in him. John Hancock, the US director of WH Smith, is to become

the new chief executive — two months after joining MFI as a non-executive director.

Mr Hunt, who is due to retire as chairman in September, said he may now be persuaded to stay on to oversee the change-over. He said: "I could not bear to leave the company without seeing it in the right hands."

Mr Hancock said he will be looking at a range of reforms, and has not ruled out dropping the MFI brand name in

an attempt to take it upmarket.

Mr Randall will receive £302,000 due from his 12-month contract and £152,000 in accrued pension payments. His share options, exercisable at 115p and 120p, are worthless as the company's shares are now 36p, sliding 1p yesterday.

MFI said its underlying sales in the past four months are 14 per cent lower than last time.

Commentary, page 27

Mortgage protection boost

By PAULA HAWKINS

THE Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) and the Association of British Insurers (ABI) yesterday announced minimum specifications for mortgage payment protection.

The move is intended to encourage more homeowners to insure themselves against the threat of illness or redundancy.

Under the guidelines, all accident, sickness and unemployment (ASU) policies will pay out after a maximum of 60 days and for no less than 12 months after that. Any changes to the cost or conditions of policies can only be made with six months' notice. The standards will allow "fewer automatic exclusions for medical conditions", according to the CML.

There is also improved cover for self-employed people or those in part-time employment. Contract workers will be able to make claims provided they have worked for the same employer for a year, while the self-employed are covered provided they have filed for bankruptcy and have registered for the Job Seeker's Allowance.

The guidelines take effect from July 1 for new policies and July 1, 2001, for existing policies.

First Technology in £89m US deal

FIRST TECHNOLOGY announced the \$145.1 million (£89 million) acquisition of America's Control Devices in a deal that unites two of the world's leading suppliers of vehicle safety products. The acquisition will be partly funded by a one-for-four rights issue of new First Technology shares at 320p each, raising £37.6 million. Existing shares fell 64p to 370p yesterday. Control Devices, whose shares are listed on Nasdaq, was the subject of a management buyout from GTE in 1996. In the last financial year it earned net income of \$7.9 million, up from \$5.9 million in the previous 12 months.

A number of shareholders of Control Devices, including senior managers, will subscribe for new First Technology shares worth £4.9 million. First Technology, which is capitalised at about £180 million, said yesterday that trading was most satisfactory, with group sales from continuing operations exceeding last year's levels. More than 90 per cent of First Technology's sales are made outside the UK.

Croda dividend move

CRODA INTERNATIONAL, the speciality chemicals group, yesterday said that its 1998 pre-tax profit would be in line with general market expectations, which stand at about £32 million. The company also said it would bring forward payment of its final dividend of 6.8p from July to April 1. This will enable Croda to class the payment as a foreign income dividend, which brings tax advantages that are due to be abolished on April 6. The shares rose 5p to 261p.

Allied merger nears

ALLIED LEISURE, the ten-pin bowling and Burger King restaurants operator, confirmed that it is in merger talks with European Leisure, the nightclubs and cue sports group. As *The Times* reported last week, the two are discussing a nil-premium merger, although analysts expect Allied's directors to control the new board. A deal could be announced next week. The market welcomed the news, with Allied's shares gaining 2p to 274p and European closing 14p higher at 70p.

Kvaerner into the red

KVAERNER, the Anglo-Norwegian shipping and engineering group, reported pre-tax losses of 1.35 billion crowns (£105 million) against profits last year of 1.51 billion crowns, sending the company's shares tumbling by more than 6 per cent on the Oslo bourse. Kjell Almskog, president, said: "These unsatisfactory results reflect very negative business developments for Kvaerner in 1998. The year was marked by decline in our main markets and a change of management and of priorities."

Vymura prospects lift

VYMURA, the wallpaper manufacturer, saw its shares rise 104p to 734p as it reported a good start to 1999. Pre-tax profit for the year ended December 31 was £3.2 million, down from £5.1 million, but ahead of market expectations. Turnover was £40.6 million (£41 million). Andrew Garey, the chairman, said that sales in January were ahead of budget, and he expects "opportunities for sales growth". Earnings per share were 9.4p (8.2p) and the final dividend of 4p (3.8p) gives a total for the year of 5.7p (5.4p).

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Water blocks

Not so fast, prime minister



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Tony Blair insisted yesterday that he was not signalling a change of policy, merely a change of gear. In Britain's move towards euroland, if he changes gear with his foot on the accelerator, as he appears to be, he is well advised to take the bus in future.

With this gear change, he admits to advocating government spending on systems which may never be needed. What is more, he calls on business to do the same. Businessmen, even those who want to see Britain's earliest possible entry into euroland, should ignore such exhortations. Shareholders would have every reason to feel aggrieved if their companies started to invest now in preparation for something which may never happen. Until there is a commitment to Britain joining the single currency, it would be foolhardy for organisations to pay for the preparations that would then be necessary. Even Mr Blair in his most presidential gear has accepted that there must be a referendum before that can happen, albeit that the economic tests he and Chancellor Gordon Brown have formulated are regarded as sufficiently flexible as to constitute no obstacle.

Britain's banks have already been made aware of the Government's view that they should be making ready for Britain's entry

into the single currency. They have responded politely, but firmly, that they do not intend to gamble in that way. They are already investing heavily in preparing for the certainty that the year 2000 will arrive. They have coped perfectly happily with the advent of the euro.

But banks, as other businesses, are used to dealing with foreign currencies. That does not lead inevitably to them giving up their own. Mr Blair made much yesterday of the fact that 86 per cent of large retailers have suppliers in the eurozone and 44 per cent of them are planning to pay those suppliers in euros. This was, apparently, seen as demonstrative of the fact that we are almost in euroland. But as Mr Blair should know from the brand names that his children parade across their chests, many British retailers also have suppliers in the United States. It is a fair bet that plenty of those are paid in dollars. Such transactions have been going on happily for many years and without benefit of a National Changeover Plan.

The debate about the single currency is not yet over and busi-

ness should not be bamboozled into believing that it is. Neither should the Department of Social Security or other government departments be spending taxpayers' money on false assumptions. The indications are that the public sector still has enormous work to do in eradicating the millennium bug. That is where systems expenditure and effort should be concentrated until our entry into euroland is agreed.

Eddie's confusion costs us too much

Eddie George is one of those fellows who knows so much and yet so little. In humble mood yesterday, the Governor confessed to the Commons Treasury Select Committee that he found the continued strength of sterling against the euro difficult to explain. As he was speaking the euro fell to its

lowest ever against our threatened currency, about 67.5p.

Allowing for conversion from marks or francs, that is the sort of exchange rate that in 1995 brought the biggest UK trade deficit with the rest of the world since 1999. That was the year that our economy was overheating ahead of a painful recession induced by monetary policy.

Few would contend that the UK economy was overheating in 1998. Rather, it just managed to reach the end of December without stopping altogether.

Others might not find the euro's weakness against the pound so hard to explain. Even after the latest Bank of England interest rate cut and before the expected cut by the European Central Bank in a month's time, there is still a 2.5 point gap between the ECB's euro rate of 3 per cent and the UK base rate of 5.5 per cent.

Currency trends are about ex-

pectations rather than absolutes. Even DeAnne Julius, the dove who flies from the ark of the Monetary Policy Committee, argued that UK monetary policy was now in the neutral zone of 4-6 per cent. If that means anything, it is that any rate below 4 per cent would be a deliberate attempt to get a slumping economy moving and stop prices falling. And that is not likely.

The Governor provided the other side of the explanation for the euro's hardly sparkling debut: America's economy has been more robust than expected while that of continental Europe has been weaker.

Expectations being what counts, euroland's failure to live up to them is more damaging than the UK's comparatively, but expected, slower growth. The implication for any trader is that UK short-term rates will remain higher than those obtainable on euro funds for the foreseeable fu-

ture, probably by a comfortable margin. And what that means for anyone who has to compete with suppliers overseas is that life is not going to get any easier.

A short-term benefit to exporters is not, however, a strong enough reason for a long-term move into euroland.

Pulling all the right Unilevers

Not all FitzGerald, who enthuses over the single currency as vociferously as he warns of the perils of the millennium bug, was the hero of the stock market yesterday having admitted that his shareholders could probably use £5 billion better than he could.

Institutional investors applaud such honesty rather than regarding it as evidence of a lack of imagination. But then they too demonstrate a singular lack of imagination with what to do with the cash. As the FTSE 100 shot up yesterday, the 350 barely moved. Fund managers do not want to look beyond the majors, so if Footsie companies insist on handing them back their cash, the

chances are that it will not be long before it is piled back into the same stocks.

The proceeds from selling its specialty chemicals business to ICI have been sitting in Unilever's pockets for a couple of years. There have been acquisitions during that time but not the big deal that the gossips had advocated. This special dividend does not preclude an opportunistic pounce by Mr FitzGerald, but it has enhanced his reputation in the City. His former colleague, Charles Miller Smith, who handed him the £5 billion, has not fared so well. Far from handing cash back to shareholders, ICI is the proud possessor of a specialty chemicals business, but may be forced to cut its dividend in the next 12 months.

Hancock's hour

HOW far-sighted of John Hancock to have accepted a non-executive directorship of MFI last year. Now that the dismal performance has dispensed with the services of its chief executive, Mr Hancock can slide smoothly into the role without any head-hunting fees. But John Hancock's abrupt departure has been enough to preserve Derek Hunt's reign as chairman? If he survives past his professed September retirement date, it will be proof that Mr Hunt is made of tougher stuff than some MFI furniture.

BG set to avoid regulator with Transco revamp

By CARL MORTISHED, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

BG, the company which owns Transco, Britain's gas pipeline company, is developing plans to create a £1 billion business out of Transco's operations and maintenance activities in order to shift a large part of BG's business out of the control of the industry regulator.

The restructuring of Transco would separate the management of its £12 billion of pipeline assets from the operational side of the business, opening the door to competitive tendering and subcontracting in a similar way to how Railtrack runs the railways. Ultimately, the operations could be demerged.

Philip Hampton, finance director of BG said the plan was to generate value by creating a competitive business which would escape regulatory control. "The regulator continues to tighten the screw on costs but if you get more trans-

parency, there is no longer an argument about what the costs should be."

BG also announced plans to merge the management of its upstream exploration and international gas businesses under the leadership of Frank Chapman, exploration director. At the same time, BG revealed a rise in fourth-quarter pre-tax profit from £373 million to £426 million and a final dividend increase of 7.5 per cent to 4.3p, making a full-year payout of 8.6p.

Transco's operating profits surged from £253 million to £444 million, thanks to colder weather which helped to boost volumes by 4 per cent, offsetting a 1997 price cut of 13 per cent.

David Varney, BG's chief executive said that the merger of the upstream exploration arm and BG's international gas business would sharpen its competitive edge. However,

he denied that it was a prelude to a demerger. BG's upstream was forced to write down its investment in KomArctic Oil, a Russian joint venture, by £8 million, leaving profits of £31 million for the quarter. Production was up 18 per cent but the growth was more than offset by falling oil and gas prices.

Mr Varney sought to dampen speculation that BG was plotting a bid for either Lloyds or Enterprise, the two oil explorers currently in merger discussions. Referring to the option of growth by acquisition, he said: "Assets are still fully priced."

Mr Hampton said that shifting Transco's operational businesses out of regulatory control could create scope for profitable divestments. They represent cash expenditure of about £1 billion including employment costs of £600 million.

Tempos, page 28

ABP extends buyback as earnings rise

By PAUL ARMSTRONG

ASSOCIATED British Ports Holdings has extended its £100 million share buyback by £50 million and says property sales could finance further increases.

Sir Keith Stuart, chairman, said yesterday that, though it would take another ten years to fully dispose of its substantial property portfolio, shareholder value would be fully recognised by such a move as it was property investments that were responsible for ABP's poor share price performance. With ABP stock trading at about the same level as five years ago, Sir Keith said the market had failed to understand its property divisions.

His comments came after ABP announced a 4.6 per cent increase in 1998 pre-tax earnings to £102.2 million, which failed to move its shares in a generally buoyant trading day on the market. Through the results were in line with market expectations, the shares closed 3p lower at 26.5p. A final dividend of 5.75p takes the full-year payout to 10.25p (9p).

The company's ports division managed a 9 per cent rise in operating profit to £126.7 million after big falls in steel ex-



Stuart: property sales

ports were offset by higher volumes of grain, vehicles and petroleum products. Sir Keith said ABP was exposed to the impact of the Asian economic crisis on many British exports but profit margins had held up.

He did not envisage increased price pressure this year, partly because of the long-term nature of ABP's port contracts.

The property investment division, which generates rental income, reported a 14 per cent rise in operating profit to £16.7 million. Earnings from property development, which includes land sales, were 5 per cent higher at £6.8 million.

Admiral shares on the slide

Shares of Admiral, the IT services group, fell 9 per cent after the company reported results that failed to satisfy analysts' expectations. Admiral reported a 34 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the year to December 31 from £17.5 million to £23.5 million on sales of £147 million, up 26 per cent. Normalised earnings per share rose from 17.8p to 25.2p. The company said it would pay a final dividend of 2.4p (2p), bringing the total for the year to 35p, up from 29p. Shares of the company fell from £14.17 to £12.90.

Tempos, page 28

Eidos Net service Eidos, the video games publisher behind titles such as *Tomb Raider* and *Michael Owen's World League Soccer* yesterday became the latest company to offer a free Internet access service. The service offers multiple e-mail addresses, 20MB of personal web space, a news service, and telephone support charged at 50p a minute.

Biomedix search KS Biomedix is seeking marketing partners for its treatment for osteoarthritis, which has completed a phase II trial that suggested it was more effective than an existing therapy. Losses for the six months to November 30 were £534,000 (£557,000 loss).

Regulator blocks Olivetti

By CARL MORTISHED

OLIVETTI reacted angrily yesterday to the decision by Consob, the Italian stock exchange regulator, to reject its £36 billion bid for Telecom Italia. The ambitious conglomerate is now scrambling to put together a firm offer in order to pre-empt any attempt by the privatised utility to erect defences to a takeover.

Olivetti accused Consob yesterday of reaching a decision without consultation. It said:

"Consob's decision has been reached having received only comments of Telecom Italia and not those of Olivetti."

The decision by Consob, the Italian stock exchange regulator, to reject the bid has dramatically increased the pressure on Olivetti. Franco Bernabè, chief executive of Telecom Italia, is expected to reveal Telecom's industrial strategy later this week, an opportunity to wrong-foot Olivetti's bid strategy.

The board of Olivetti will to-

day consider a five trillion lire cash call on its shareholders to create a war chest to finance its bid. The capital raising is likely to be underwritten by Bell, a Luxembourg company and 13 per cent shareholder that is controlled by Roberto Colaninno, Olivetti's chief executive.

The underwriting will fuel the concern of Telecom Italia shareholders that a minority of Olivetti investors will end up controlling Europe's third-largest telephone company.

Generators spiked

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

POWER generators face new restrictions on their ability to increase the price of electricity before an overhaul of the market.

Callum McCarthy, the electricity and gas regulator, yesterday set out proposals to streamline the bidding process so that price spikes will be minimised. There is a fear that, before the

market — the electricity pool — is completely reorganised next year, the generators will indulge in greater manipulation, than they are already accused of.

The plans are designed to cut prices before the market is changed without imposing a price cap, John Baulle, the Energy and Industry Minister, said. "We are determined that customers should not suffer as a result of the ability of generators to manipulate pool prices."

NYSE open all hours

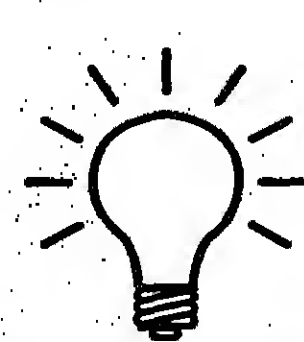
By OLIVER AUGUST

RICHARD GRASSO, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, yesterday suggested that the world's biggest stock market could soon be open for trading almost 24 hours a day. In a bid to fight off competition from other markets, the NYSE is expected to lengthen trading hours in June next year.

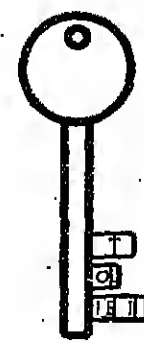
Mr Grasso said: "It is not unreasonable to expect the Big Board to open at 5am and close at midnight." Currently, trading is restricted to 9.30am to 4pm.

Companies on the New York exchange are being wooed by the Nasdaq market, which is expanding quickly after the merger with the American Exchange, the third biggest US exchange. Dealers on Nasdaq trade electronically while the New York Stock Exchange still features open outcry trading.

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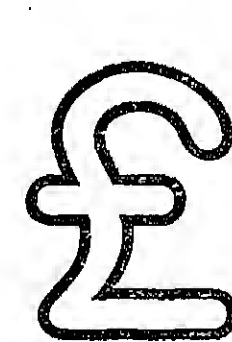
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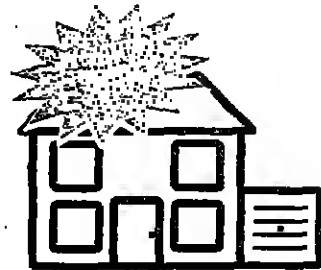
You use the One account to pay your bills. You agree a limit on how much you need to borrow, and then the limit goes up to the total value of your home. You can then spend up to this limit now and when you please, such as on home improvements or, if you'd prefer, a round the world ticket. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, such as the mortgage, for you get the same competitive mortgage rate of interest.



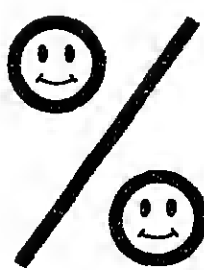
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Le Meridien restores bistro chic to its dining rooms



Michel Rostang: not tempted by traditional British fare

Despite the best efforts of Sir Terence Conran and his London rivals, France remains the gastronomic centre of the world, and it is a matter of pride that even the most humble street-corner bistros serve high-quality food at remarkable prices.

It is ironic, therefore, that it has taken British ownership for the bosses of Le Meridien Hotels & Resorts, one of France's foremost hotel chains since it was founded by Air France 27 years ago, to realise that its hotel dining facilities are letting the side down. A favourite jibe of the cynics has been that the chain's food is comparable with that found in the airline's economy class.

The result is that Meridien, part of Forté and then Granada since 1994, has signed a five-year deal with one of Paris's top chefs to breathe new life into its jaded dining rooms. Michel

Dominic Walsh reports on Granada's efforts to breathe life into the hotel chain's jaded restaurants

Rostang, whose £9 million turnover business includes a two-Michelin-starred restaurant and the popular Le Bistrot d'A Côté chain, is to be paid an estimated £100,000 a year to oversee the introduction of a number of different restaurant formats.

Bernard Lambert, managing director of Meridien, admitted that, although some of the group's hotels had attracted Michelin-starred chefs, things had become "a bit static" in recent years. "I want to get away from the hotel dining room concept," he said. "What I want to bring is a feeling that people are running their own restaurants, not simply a hotel facility. There is nothing more unpleasant

than having someone putting out the coffee cups for breakfast when you're still finishing your dinner."

The first evidence of M Rostang's influence is being felt at the group's London flagship, on Piccadilly, already home to Marco Pierre White, the controversial three-Michelin-starred chef, who has a lease on the Oak Room. The company has spent £500,000 redeveloping the first-floor Terrace restaurant, which reopened this week as a brasserie serving mainly French food for about £25 to £30 a head, including wine.

M Rostang is diplomatic about the job he faces, insisting that Meridien "has a very good reputation as a ho-

telier". One of the first things he had to do for the London project was get round the stringent buying policies introduced by Granada after it bought Forté three years ago. "We have managed to change the policy for some products," he said. "For example, we will have poulet de Bresse rather than ordinary chicken."

Asked whether he was tempted to include traditional British dishes such as steak and kidney pudding on the menu, he responded with a Gallic shrug: "I don't know how to do it."

Although M Rostang will make occasional visits across the Channel, the kitchen will be run on a full-time basis by Pascale Even, who has

worked with him for almost ten years. "We're not trying to create a gastronomic restaurant," he said. "What we're trying to do is mix the gastronomic with the style of a bistro. It will be a casual restaurant with a French touch."

The second project, due to open early next year, will be at Le Meridien Etoile in Paris, the chain's first hotel, which opened in 1972. Here M Rostang has developed a less formal bistro concept that both parties hope will be capable of being rolled out across the 100-strong chain, although menus will allow for local culture. Cities already earmarked are Amsterdam, Monte Carlo, New Orleans, Dallas and Taipei, with Cologne, Frankfurt and the Ritz Madrid to follow.

"We will do half a dozen a year as a minimum, time permitting," said M Lambert.

Single currency would put UK's unconverted in a spin

Sarah Cunningham, Fraser

Nelson and Caroline Merrell ask whether Britain is ready for the euro

If Britain decides to adopt the euro, one of the more rather bizarre side effects will be that security guards will find themselves much in demand. If, as the Government indicated yesterday, there are six months during which sterling and the euro run in parallel, retailers will have to accept payment in pounds and give change in euros. The guards will be needed to keep a close eye on the pounds piling up in the shops, and to ferry the currency to its final resting place.

Who will pay the wages of these guards is a moot point between the Government and the retail sector. It is by no means the only one. The British Retail Consortium had been looking for a clear three years between a referendum decision to join and the introduction of euro cash. Tony Blair told Parliament yesterday that it could be as little as two years. The BRC says that a swift conversion to the euro could cost the industry as much as £4 billion as staff training and computer programming is rushed through. Taking a full three years could cost half that total.

Mr Blair's suggestion that industry should begin making big investments now, before Britain has decided whether to join, also failed to find a welcome. Martin Cooper, a senior manager at Deloitte Consulting, said: "People will not commit shareholders' resources until it is definite."

Larger retailers that already have operations in euroland, such as Tesco, Marks & Spencer and Boots, are exceptions. They are going to have to learn to live with euros whether Britain joins or not, and have had to prepare for the new currency. Boots has estimated that it will cost £40 million to prepare for the change in The Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland, where it has stores, and the UK. Training staff will account for most of the cost.

As the Government recognises in its National Changeover Plan, there are a host of issues for the retail and financial services sectors. Of particular concern to small traders is that a long period of parallel trading would mean that they had to double their numbers of tills — one for pounds, one for euros. The larger players, with computerised systems, will have fewer problems.

Moss Bros, which owns Hugo Boss, Blazer and Cecil

Gee, has programmed its computerised tills to convert any price to euros. Rowland Gee, its managing director, said: "All it took was a couple of lines of computer program. It was no problem at all."

But Mr Gee suspects that retailers do have one trick up their sleeve, which could be bad news for shoppers but good news for shops.

When sterling is finally wiped out, he says, retailers will find that a £34.99 shirt carrying a new price tag of £23.77 — a far less eye-catching price. A red-blooded retailer would be tempted to round this up £24.99 — a cheeky 5 per cent price rise. He said: "UK retailers rounded up during decimalisation in 1971. This is already happening in Germany — 29 marks works out at something like £4.50, and that's not a very attractive price. So they mark it up, and you have a bit of inflation creeping in."

Among the smaller companies, slot machine operators will suffer some of the worst upheavals. In the last few years the industry has had to accommodate the new 5p, 50p and £2 coins — but the industry is now having to prepare for a complete changeover.

Steve Jones owns Plymouth Fruit Machines, which rents out about 175 slot machines to clubs and pubs along the south coast of England. He said: "This will be very, very difficult for us. It cost us £6,500 to accept the new 50p pieces. With the euro it will be a whole new coin set, so the cost will be double that at least."

The coin slots are normally big enough to cope with anything, and will not need to be altered. Conversion is a matter of teaching the machines to recognise different weights of new coins — this can be done by changing the microchip.

Mr Jones says he can either call in mechanics, who charge about £35 per machine, or buy his own microchips and software at a cost of £1,500 — and take a hit on profits.

The fruit machine producers are in a much better position. Almost all of the main players supply continental Europe as well as the UK, so they won't need the 30 months to come up with new technology.

MayGay, the UK's largest independent fruit machine producer, churns out about 20,000 units a year from its 200-strong workforce in Wolverhampton. Dean Harding, its sales director, said: "Because we export to other countries, we're going to



M&S has already started displaying prices in both euros and guilders in The Netherlands

M&S STAYS IN THE VAN

MARKS & SPENCER, which has stores across Europe, is by common consent the best prepared of all Britain's retailers for the introduction of the euro. Preparation has not been cheap, however. The retailer has spent £150 million on developing and fitting a whole new till system. Other costs, including the training of staff, come on top of that.

The company is keen to emphasise that its decision to prepare so thoroughly for the euro was by no means a political one: it simply became a necessity as the countries which it had expanded into across Europe — including France, Germany, The Netherlands and Spain — decided to adopt the single currency in the first wave. "One of the advantages of the split of the business is that we can learn from what's happening in continental Europe," a spokesman said.

Although euro notes and coins are not going to be introduced in euroland until 2002, the company has already started displaying prices in both euros and guilders in The Netherlands. It will start doing the same in other parts of euroland in the coming months. The new tills will show transaction costs in both the national currency and euros.

The 11,000 tills, the backbone of Marks & Spencer's euro preparation, will be fitted by the end of this year. At that point, the company will be as ready as can be reasonably expected for the single currency.

SARAH CUNNINGHAM

THE EUROPEAN COSTS BEFORE EMU

Banks will be in the frontline when it comes to explaining the real implications of the euro to the public. However, they are reluctant to commit themselves to spending hundreds of millions of pounds before the Government sets a clear date for joining European Monetary Union.

Judging by the experience of European banks, Ian Harley, chief executive of Abbey National, believes that making

his organisation euro-ready will cost three or four times the £120 million it has spent on the millennium bug problem. Abbey argues on serious public company could commit itself to spending up to £500 million of its shareholders' money before the Government has even set the date for a referendum on the euro.

Computer systems will, inevitably, form the largest part of the euro bill.

Banks will have to decide how to present statements. Will customers want all transactions and balances in both currencies? With 15 million customers, this presents a big technical challenge. But banks will also have to train their staff to handle the new currency, and explain new statements to customers.

PAUL DURMAN

take the pain and get on the learning curve. By the time the euro is introduced to the UK, we'll have the discipline under our belt."

At the other end of the scale, the big banks are also facing big headaches. NatWest revealed yesterday that it had already spent £45 million on adapting its systems to dealing with the UK being out of the euro. Derek Wanless, chief executive, admitted that it would

have to spend many multiples of that amount to adapt the bank's systems to the UK joining the single currency.

The bank itself is neutral on whether the UK should join the euro or stay out. Tony Willis, group EMU coordinator, said: "Half of the money spent is on IT issues, while the rest is spent on training up staff." He admitted that there was bound to be some effect on the foreign exchange revenue generated by

the bank as a result of joining the single currency. However, the revenue lost on foreign exchange because the bank was no longer trading sterling against the euro could be made up by trading the euro against the dollar and the yen.

Margaret Soden, Midland Bank's senior manager of EMU planning, said: "Money has been spent on the wholesale market operation. We have spent money on adapting

the major corporate foreign currency accounts." She also pointed out that the bank has expanded the payment mechanisms it offered its customers as part of its preparations.

Lloyds TSB has already spent £23 million on the euro project, and expects to see the total rise to £32 million. The bank, which has 14 million customers, said that if the UK joins the single currency, the costs could top £200 million.

Best advice

RELATIONS between the Financial Services Authority and the trade body for the investment industry have turned fragile again. The row began when Kevin James, a researcher with the FSA, produced a paper claiming that fund managers were overcharging wildly for their services.

His research was rubbished by the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds, but enough leaked to embarrass the fund managers.

I have a copy of a letter that has now gone out from Philip Warland, Autif's director-general, to members. In it he queries "how a researcher in the FSA was allowed to spend so much time on such worthless research".

He says the affair has damaged the industry's relationship with the regulator and suggests how to prevent its recurrence. The FSA needs a "research advisory panel" drawn from academics, the investment industry and the regulator to decide what research the latter may carry out.

This would mean fund managers giving orders to an independent regulator, and understandably it has not gone down well at the FSA. Warland tells me he has floated the idea with a senior FSA official but has yet to hear back. I break it to him gently that the response is unlikely to be positive. "Well, there's a surprise."

ABOUT two decades ago the Financial Times produced one of its big special reports on Nigeria after an election there. The issue was, if memory serves, scheduled for early in January but was written some time beforehand. It began along the lines of "now that Nigeria has returned to stable government..."

On or about December 29 there was a military coup, and the whole survey had to be pulped. Yesterday the FT ran another one, again to mark the elections. This time it begins "Nearly 40 years after it won independence from Britain..." On somewhat safer ground there, I think.

Trade off

I HAVE a statement here from Brian Wilson, the Trade Minister, on the latest trade figures.



Wilson: former journalist



which he welcomes. "This puts into perspective some of the gloomier accounts of how our exporters, backed by Government, are facing up to global difficulties," he warbles.

Is he really describing Britain's biggest trade deficit for almost a decade? Honestly, of all the bare-faced spin... I'm sorry. A colleague has just reminded me that Wilson started his career as a journalist.

TO ADD to its chapin over the William Hill sale, I hear that Warburg Dillon Read is receiving thousands of angry letters from frustrated private investors.

There are some ingenious suggestions for reparation. If Warburgs were offering the shares at 135p in the offer and the business was sold for 150p, then surely would-be investors should be receiving an extra 15p a share, or £1.111 for every £1,000 of shares they wanted?

Then there is the chap who took five grand out of a forex account. Since the withdrawal the forex market has turned against him, and he wants his money back.

Bear faced

I HAD always thought of builders as rugged, no-nonsense chaps in hard hats. But I learn from the trade paper *Contract Journal* that one firm is buying teddy bears for managers, who are encouraged to cuddle them in times of stress and ask them: "Teddy, what do you think?"

An arresting picture, is it not? Especially in their hard hats.

David Barker, a management consultant, has been seconded to Birse to help to reclaim £40 million owed on various projects. He is maintaining an enigmatic silence, but the teddy bear idea is his, the magazine claims.

Birse is, it seems, no stranger to eye-catching stunts. Last year, in pursuance of a claim for £11 million against a Welsh local council, staff dressed up as cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny and paraded past the council offices. Don't ask why.

MARTIN WALLER
city.diary@the-times.co.uk

Inadequate cover is key to PPP dispute

From Mr Alan Shrank

If the London Consultants' Association are unhappy with PPP (February 19), one of the largest UK private medical insurance companies, because they insist on their insured being cared for only in certain hospitals, many of which they own, surely their objection is not restraint of trade but should be directed at the inadequacy of their patient's policy.

The contract that PPP has with its insured clients. The doctor's contract is with their agent. If the insurance cover their patient enjoys does not cover treatment in the hospital the doctors regard as safe and appropriate, surely it is the policy cover that is inadequate and this should be pointed out to the patient.

When purchasing any insurance policy, whether for your car, your house or your valuables, it is essential to understand the exclusions exacted by the insurer.

Once accepted, no demand can be made of the insurer, for example, for subsidence or for theft if they have been excluded from the policy.

London hospitals excluded from health policies are either the very expensive or small independent and often charitable hospitals, while those included are often owned by the insurer, a legitimate restriction not on trade but on the policy holder.

Exclusion of the small hospitals may eventually lead to their closure and their convenience for patients, because of proximity to their home, will be lost.

It is obviously important for prospective clients to know the significance of the exclusion of particular hospitals from their insurance policies and how this would affect their private medical care.

The difficulty arises when adequate facilities are not available at the listed hospitals, a fact not always appreciated by the patient. If hazard could arise, quite properly the doctor cannot be expected to take the risk.

Insurers must be aware of this hazard, and be prepared to make necessary adjustments.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN B. SHRANK,
20 Crescent Place,
Town Walls,
Shrewsbury
SY1 1TQ.

Warburg's sure thing

From Mr Eddie Walsh

Sir, After the debacle of the Thomson Travel share offer, one would think that Warburg Dillon Read would have earned its fees by being extra careful over the now pulled William Hill float.

Potential investors will be fuming while awaiting refunds of their already cashed cheques. The next time Warburgs act as flotation advisers the £30 at Ascot will seem a better bet.

Yours faithfully,
EDDIE WALSH,
7 Cotswold Court,
Beeston,
Nottingham,
NG9 3LJ.

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Court of Appeal

Law Report February 24 1999

Court of Appeal

Controlling shareholder can be employee

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry v Bottrill
Before Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Peter Gibson and Lord Justice Mummery
[Judgment February 12]

A controlling shareholder of a company could also be an employee of that company who was entitled under the Employment Rights Act 1996 to recover from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry money owed by the company when it became insolvent.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment dismissing the appeal of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry against the decision of the Employment Appeal Tribunal (Mr A. C. Blythson and Mrs R. Chapman) [1998] ICR 564 to uphold the decision of the Industrial Tribunal that Mr Peter Bottrill was entitled to claim a payment from the secretary of state under section 184 of the 1996 Act.

Ms Jennifer Eady for the secretary of state Mr Martyn Barklen for Mr Bottrill.

THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS, giving the judgment of the court, said that whether a person who was a controlling shareholder of a company could also be an employee of that company for the purposes of the 1996 Act was an issue on which there had been conflicting previous decisions.

In *Buchan v Secretary of State for Employment* [1997] IRLR 80 the Employment Appeal Tribunal had decided that a controlling shareholder could not be an employee for that purpose.

In *Fleming v Secretary of State for Trade and Industry* [1997] IRLR 682 the Inner House of the Court of Session did not apply *Buchan* and had decided that a controlling shareholder could be an employee.

Whether he was an employee or not depended on all the circum-

stances. A similar view had been taken by the appeal tribunal in the present case.

The significance of the issue was that if the controlling shareholder was an employee, then upon any of the conditions specified in section 166(7) being satisfied, broadly speaking on insolvency, as an employee, the controlling shareholder was entitled to recover certain sums, which would otherwise be owing from the company, from the secretary of state in accordance with the provisions of the Act, including statutory redundancy payments (section 166), unpaid wages and holiday pay and moneys in lieu of notice, the basic award of compensation in respect of unfair dismissal and other payments, including protective awards, and moneys due for time taken off work for trade union duties, etc (section 184).

Mr Bottrill had become managing director of Magnatech UK Ltd in 1994. There had been one other director and two other individuals had been employees.

The one share of the company which was issued had been held by Mr Bottrill. It had, however, been intended in the future that an American group, which supplied Magnatech with all items for sale, would hold 80 per cent of the shares in the company.

A draft shareholders' agreement describing the proposed relationship between the group and Magnatech had been prepared.

However, before the agreement was executed, Magnatech had become insolvent. At that time Mr Bottrill was still the sole shareholder. A receiver had been appointed. Mr Bottrill had become redundant and had been dismissed.

The industrial tribunal, in concluding that Mr Bottrill had been an employee, had relied on its findings that Mr Bottrill's status as sole shareholder had only been temporary and any control which he had had of the company was

only theoretical. The actual control had been held by the American group.

The tribunal had laid stress on the fact that Mr Bottrill had paid national insurance contributions and tax as if he was an employee, had worked fixed hours and had a contract with Magnatech that was described as a contract of employment.

Having considered *Fleming* and *Buchan* the court had concluded that, of the two approaches, it had no hesitation in preferring the approach in *Fleming*.

As the court understood the reasoning in *Buchan*, it was the ability of the shareholder to prevent his dismissal which was crucial and that use his voting rights to that end.

But shareholders in general did not have the right to interfere with management decisions save pursuant to resolutions passed in general meeting. But by then the dismissal might have occurred.

The gloss sought to be given to "employee" in the Act, based as it was on the ability of the controlling shareholder to prevent his dismissal, was all the more surprising when applied to a case such as the present when Mr Bottrill had been powerless to prevent his actual dismissal which triggered his claim.

The court recognised the attractions of having in relation to the Act a simple and clear test which would determine whether a shareholder or a director was an employee for the purposes of the Act or not. However, the Act did not provide such a test and it was far from obvious what Parliament would have intended the test to be.

The court did not find any justification for departing from the well established position in the law of employment generally. That was whether or not an employer/employee relationship existed could be decided only by having regard to all the relevant facts.

If an individual had a controlling shareholding, that was certainly a fact which was likely to be significant in all situations and in some cases it might prove to be decisive.

However, it was only one of the factors which were relevant and certainly was not to be taken as determinative without considering all the relevant circumstances.

Both *Fleming* and the appeal tribunal to the present case had made it clear that the scope for abuse was limited. The court would reaffirm its view as to the use of devices to seek remedies against the secretary of state in inappropriate circumstances.

However, those cases apart, it was right in note that, in a case such as the present where national insurance contributions had been paid, to deprive an individual of his claims under the Act could be to deprive unjustly that individual of the benefits to which he could properly expect to be entitled after he and his "employee" had made the appropriate contributions.

The industrial tribunal had been entitled to conclude that there had been a genuine contractual relationship between Mr Bottrill and his company and, having carefully and properly weighed the competing factors, it had arrived at a conclusion which was unimpeachable on the facts.

The secretary of state had expressly accepted that if he was wrong in supporting the approach in law in *Buchan*, the appeal had to be dismissed. He had asked the court to provide what guidance it could because of the frequency with which problems of the type exemplified by the present case arose.

The court was anxious not to lay down rigid guidelines for the inquiry which the tribunal of fact had to undertake in the particular circumstances of each case, but the court hoped that the following comments might be of assistance.

The first question which the tribunal was likely to wish to consider was whether there was or had been a genuine contract between the company and the shareholder.

In that context how and for what reasons the contract had come into existence, for example, whether the contract was made at a time when insolvency loomed, and what each party actually did pursuant to the contract were likely to be relevant considerations.

If the tribunal concluded that the contract was not a sham, it was likely in which to consider next whether the contract, which might well have been labelled a contract of employment, actually gave rise to an employer/employee relationship.

In that context, of the various factors usually regarded as relevant, the degree of control exercised by the company over the shareholder employee was always important. That was not the same question as that relating to whether there was a controlling shareholding.

The tribunal might think it appropriate to consider whether there were directors other than or in addition to the shareholder employee and whether the constitution of the company gave that shareholder rights such that he was in reality answerable only to himself and incapable of being dismissed.

If he was a director, it might be relevant to consider whether he was able under the articles of association to vote on matters in which he was personally interested, such as the termination of his contract of employment. Again, the actual conduct of the parties pursuant to the terms of the contract was likely to be relevant.

It was for the tribunal as an industrial jury to take all relevant factors into account in reaching its conclusion, giving such weight to them as it considered appropriate.

Solicitors: Treasury Solicitor; Shumkins, Leeds.

O'Mahoney v Joffe and Another

Before Lord Justice Simon Brown, Lord Justice Ward and Lord Justice Robert Walker
[Judgment February 15]

A pillion passenger who knew the motorcycle driver was uninsured and who had agreed on a joint venture to drive for a drive for the thrill of the drive itself was "a person using the vehicle" within the meaning of clause 6(1)(d)(ii) of the Motor Insurers' Bureau (Compensation of Victims of Uninsured Drivers) Agreement 1972 and could not claim compensation from the bureau.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment in allowing an appeal by the second defendant, the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) against the decision of Mr Justice Bell in the Queen's Bench Division at Bristol on February 10, 1998 that the MIB was liable for damages, to be assessed for an accident in which the plaintiff, Lucy Maria Goretti O'Mahoney, was injured by the first defendant, Thomas Anthony Joffe, who was uninsured.

Clause 6 of the 1972 agreement provided: "(1) MIB shall not incur any liability under this agreement in a case where: (a) at the time of the accident the persons suffering... bodily injury in respect of which the claim is made was allowing himself to be carried in a vehicle and... (b) ... being a person using the vehicle, he was using... the vehicle... without there being in force... a contract of insurance."

Mr Desmond O'Brien and Mr Bradley Martin for the MIB; Mr Richard Methuen, QC and Mr Brian Gallagher for the plaintiff.

LORD JUSTICE SIMON BROWN said that the plaintiff was seriously injured in a road accident when she had been pillion on the first defendant's motorcycle when he lost control and crashed.

The judge held that as between the plaintiff and first defendant the latter was wholly to blame and ordered him to pay 100 per cent of the plaintiff's damages to be assessed.

The first defendant was, however, uninsured and hence the involvement of the MIB. The MIB counterclaimed for a declaration that they were exempt from any liability to the plaintiff under clause 6(1)(d)(ii) of the agreement.

The judge found that the plaintiff knew there was no contract of insurance in force. He concluded, however, that at the time of the accident the plaintiff was not "a person using the vehicle" so that the MIB was not exempt from liability under clause 6. The correctness of

that conclusion was the single issue raised on the appeal.

At the time of the accident, the plaintiff was 20 and the defendant 18. The defendant lived with his mother. The plaintiff came from Ireland and was travelling with the defendant's cousin. The two girls came to stay at the defendant's house.

The defendant was mostly unemployed and spent much of his time working on motorcycles. The one which he crashed he had bought a few months earlier for £10. By the time of the accident, work on the bike was virtually finished.

On a number of occasions the defendant's mother had told the defendant, his cousin and the plaintiff not to go out on the bike. She had specifically reminded them that there was no tax, no MOT, no insurance and no driving licence and also warned them of its condition.

The judge referred to *Stinson v Stinson* [1995] RTR 167, *Hutton v Hall* [1997] RTR 212, *Brown v Roberts* [1995] 1 QB 1, *Leathley v Taiton* [1980] RTR 21 and *B (a minor) v Knight* [1991] RTR 136.

The central principles which could be derived from those cases were as follows:

1 "Using" in clause 6 bore the same meaning as in the road traffic Acts, now the 1988 Act, so that a user was by definition someone required to provide third party cover and, if he failed to do so, was potentially liable both criminally and civilly. "User" therefore had a restricted meaning.

2 Not all passengers were users even when they knew that the vehicle was being driven without insurance.

3 There had to be present in the putative user some element of controlling, managing or operating the vehicle.

4 That element could exist as a result of a joint venture to use the vehicle for a particular purpose or where the passenger procured the making of the journey.

5 Not every such joint venture or procurement, however, would involve the element of control or management necessary to constitute the passenger as a user.

6 Whether in any given case there was a sufficient element of control or management to constitute the passenger a user was a question of fact and degree for the trial judge.

In his Lordship's judgment this was in the very fullest sense a joint enterprise. It was not merely an agreement to travel somewhere in the uninsured vehicle, as in *Hutton v Hall*.

This case was a further to *Stinson v Stinson*.

son v Stinson. Here, unlike there, the actual riding of the vehicle was an integral part of the thrill of the venture. Here, unlike there, the judge felt able to make a positive finding that at one point during the outing the plaintiff herself actually rode the bike.

In his Lordship's judgment it was unreal and impermissible to hold, as effectively the judge did, that a party to such a venture could, so to speak, slip into and out of the status of vehicle user.

Given, as inevitably, he held, that the plaintiff was using the bike while herself riding it, given, as he could not but have held, he had specifically addressed the question, that the plaintiff was using the bike at the outset when she equal participation throughout in the central purpose of the venture, his Lordship could not accept that a point ever arrived at which the judge could properly hold that her involvement was spent and the level of her control, management or operation of the bike fell short of that necessary to constitute her as a user.

While the mere fact of knowledge of the uninsured use of the vehicle was not of itself sufficient to constitute the passenger as a user, where the whole venture evolved as one of flagrant criminality, that consideration coloured its essential nature and enabled it more properly to be characterised as one involving "user" of the vehicle on the part of all those fully participating.

That view carried with it the following conclusions that passengers who had no reason to suppose that a vehicle's use was uninsured or otherwise unlawful were less likely than those like the plaintiff to be found users of it with all the adverse criminal and civil consequences which such a finding entailed.

The present MIB agreement, which came into force on December 31, 1988 no longer required the MIB to establish user in addition to knowledge of no insurance as a condition of exemption from liability. Had, therefore, the plaintiff suffered her accident just five months later, her claim would have failed.

Nevertheless, ten years on there remained a number of cases like hers awaiting final determination. The present appeal was therefore clearly of importance not merely to the plaintiff but to others too.

LORD JUSTICE WARD delivered a concurring judgment and Lord Justice Robert Walker agreed.

Solicitors: Palmer Grossman, Southampton; Lamport Bassitt, Southampton.

Knowledge of sex offer required for conviction

Westminster City Council v Blenheim Leisure (Restaurants) Ltd and Others

Before Lord Justice Brooke, Mr Justice Tucker and Mr Justice Forbes
[Judgment February 12]

In order to establish whether offers of sexual services for reward constituted a failure to maintain good order in the premises, it was necessary for the licensee to have knowledge of the offers made.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held in dismissing an appeal, by way of case stated, by Westminster City Council, against the dismissal, by Geoffrey Brain, Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate, on March 18, 1998 at Horseferry Road Magistrates Court on informations laid against Blenheim Leisure (Restaurants) Ltd, Stinson Phillipinger and Giorgio Giuseppe Luigi Cura, that offers

to provide sexual services for reward, made by various females in police officers, did not constitute a failure by the licensee to maintain good order in the premises under paragraph 9 of Westminster City Council's Rules of Management for Places of Public Entertainment, incorporated under paragraph (1) of Schedule 12 to the London Government Act 1963, as amended by the Local Government Act 1985.

The magistrate had convicted the licensee of breaches of rule 4 of those rules.

Mr Jeremy Carter-Manning, QC and Mr Mark Bryant-Heron for Westminster; Mr Ian Glen, QC and Miss Susanna Fitzgerald for the appellants.

MR JUSTICE TUCKER said that in deciding whether the behaviour of female dancers in the appellants' clubs was in breach of rule 4 it was necessary to consider whether

their activities amounted to acts of prostitution. In their Lordships' opinion they did not.

In deciding whether the offers made by the females, having been made discreetly to an individual without being overheard or anyone else being aware of such offers, could properly be said to amount to a failure on the part of the licensee to maintain good order in the premises, what mattered was whether the licensee was aware of those activities.

It was in his Lordship's opinion immaterial whether anyone else overheard what was being offered, or was aware of it: see *R v Tan* [1983] QB 1053, 1059.

Provided that it could be established in each case that the licensee to question was aware of those practices, so that it could be said that he permitted them to take place, his Lordship of the opinion

that the offender would be made out.

To allow acts of prostitution to take place on the premises would amount to a failure to maintain good order in the premises. It was not necessary to show conduct which would amount to a public order breach of the peace, or to show that the conduct was rowdy.

The statutory provisions or the rules did not create offences of strict liability. It was necessary to establish mens rea and therefore knowledge on the part of the licensee.

Since the magistrate expressly found that no one else, including the licensee, was aware of what was being offered, his Lordship did not see how it could be said that any breach of the rule had occurred. Accordingly, the magistrate was right in law.

MR JUSTICE FORBES agreed.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE, agreeing, added that the council would do well to tighten up the law of section 9 if it wished to be able to use it to prohibit such activities on licensed premises after the Human Rights Act 1998 comes into force, since the application of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1953, Cmd 8969) would have the effect of prescribing that a criminal offence must be clearly defined.

Solicitors: Mr Colin Wilson, Westminster; Jeffrey Green Russell.

Price not misleading when published

Thomson Tour Operators Ltd v Birch

Before Lord Justice Brooke and Mr Justice Forbes
[Judgment January 26]

Section 20(1) of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 created criminal liability for indications of price which were misleading at the time they were made, and not indications of price which subsequently became misleading.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held in allowing an appeal by Thomson Tour Operators Ltd, by way of case stated, against their conviction by Redditch Justices on May 22, 1998, that they had given an indication to Allgas Lee Baxter that was misleading as an indication as to price in November 1996, and was subsequently shown to be misleading when tested in February 1997 contrary to section 20(1) of the 1987 Act.

The information was preferred by Stephen William Birch on behalf of Hereford and Worcester County Council.

Thomson's Fair Trading Charter published in their holiday brochure (second edition, April-October 1997) stated: "...our early price promise means that if we reduce the total price of a holiday, after you have booked it, we will charge the new lower price."

Section 20 of the 1987 Act provided: "(1) ... a person shall be guilty of an offence if, in the course of any business of his, he gives (by any means whatever) to any consumer an indication which is misleading as to the price at which any goods, services, accommodation or facilities are available."

Section 21 provided: "(1) For the purposes of section 20 above an indication given to any consumers is misleading if it is false or deceptive, or likely to be so, in relation to the price of the goods, services, accommodation or facilities to which it relates."

The early price promise referred to in the brochure was that if the price of a holiday was reduced after it had been booked, the consumer would be entitled to a 10 per cent discount.

The head office later refunded Mrs Baxter an amount equivalent to a 10 per cent discount.

The head office said that under section 20(1) of the 1987 Act, the person who was alleged to have no such expectation was Thomson. Under that section the prosecution was required, to prove conjunctively, that the defendant, on November 1 and 30, 1996 Thomson had indicated to Mrs Baxter that they expected the price of the holiday to be reduced; and at the time that indication was given they did not expect the price of the holiday to be reduced.

MR JUSTICE FORBES said that there was no ambiguity or uncertainty in the statutory provisions in question, and the court did not need to have regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (1953, Cmd 8969).

His Lordship was satisfied that there was no proper basis for extending to magistrates a power to make any order for the release of any cash in the absence of any specific power to make such an order.

Magistrates courts were the creatures of statute and their powers were defined and limited by statute. It was wrong to imply a power where none existed.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE agreed. Solicitors: Solicitor, Customs and Excise; Saunders & Co.

misleading as to a price if what is conveyed by the indication, or what those consumers might reasonably be expected to infer from the indication or any combination of them, is false or deceptive, or likely to be so, in relation to the price of the goods, services, accommodation or facilities to which it relates.

The first defendant was, however, uninsured and hence the involvement of the MIB. The MIB counterclaimed for a declaration that they were exempt from any liability to the plaintiff under clause 6(1)(d)(ii) of the agreement.

The judge found that the plaintiff knew there was no contract of insurance in force. He concluded, however, that at the time of the accident the plaintiff was not "a person using the vehicle" so that the MIB was not exempt from liability under clause 6. The correctness of

that conclusion was the single issue raised on the appeal.

At the time of the accident, the plaintiff was 20 and the defendant 18. The defendant lived with his mother. The plaintiff came from Ireland and was travelling with the defendant's cousin. The two girls came to stay at the defendant's house.

The defendant was mostly unemployed and spent much of his time working on motorcycles. The one which he crashed he had bought a few months earlier for £10. By the time of the accident, work on the bike was virtually finished.

On a number of occasions the defendant's mother had told the defendant, his cousin and the plaintiff not to go out on the bike. She had specifically reminded them that there was no tax, no MOT, no insurance and no driving licence and also warned them of its condition.

The judge referred to *Stinson v Stinson* [1995] RTR 167, *Hutton v Hall* [1997] RTR 212, *Brown v Roberts* [1995] 1 QB 1, *Leathley v Taiton* [1980] RTR 21 and *B (a minor) v Knight* [1991] RTR 136.

The central principles which could be derived from those cases were as follows:

1 "Using" in clause 6 bore the same meaning as in the road traffic Acts, now the 1988 Act, so that a user was by definition someone required to provide third party cover and, if he failed to do so, was potentially liable both criminally and civilly. "User" therefore had a restricted meaning.

2 Not all passengers were users even when they knew that the vehicle was being driven without insurance.

3 There had to be present in the putative user some element of controlling, managing or operating the vehicle.

4 That element could exist as a result of a joint venture to use the vehicle for a particular purpose or where the passenger procured the making of the journey.

5 Not every such joint venture or procurement, however, would involve the element of control or management necessary to constitute the passenger as a user.

6 Whether in any given case there was a sufficient element of control or management to constitute the passenger a user was a question of fact and degree for the trial judge.

In his Lordship's judgment this was in the very fullest sense a joint enterprise. It was not merely an agreement to travel somewhere in the uninsured vehicle, as in *Hutton v Hall*.

This case was a further to *Stinson v Stinson*.

to the possibility of a decrease in the price of the holiday, at some time after it had been booked.

Section 20(1) was expressed in the present tense not in the future tense and it created criminal liability for indications of price which were misleading at the time made and did not extend to the price later.

Parliament did have in mind the possibility of an indication of price which, after it was given, had become misleading since that was specifically provided for in section 20(2).

The words of the charter did not express an expectation on the part of Thomson that the price was to be increased or reduced. It could not be said that Thomson anticipated


any decrease in the price of the holiday. The justices should have acquitted Thomson.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE, agreeing, added that when the brochure was published Thomson in effect told customers that if the price went down they would charge a lower price. On the facts of this case they should have done, otherwise Mrs Baxter would be able to claim damages for breach of warranty.

But at the time they did not expect the price to go down. That would depend on the markets and there was no evidence before the justices that they would expect it to go down.

Solicitors: Mason Bond; Mr Simon Mallinson, Worcester.

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CHANGING TIMES

Court cannot release cash to fund case

Commissioners of Customs and Excise v Harris (Stephen David)

Before Lord Justice Brooke and Mr Justice Forbes
[Judgment January 26]

Where cash had been seized under section 42 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994, but forfeiture had not yet been ordered, a magistrates court did not have any jurisdiction to direct the release of cash for the purposes of funding legal proceedings under the Act.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held in allowing an appeal by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise by way of case stated against the decision of Uxbridge Justices on July 21, 1998 to allow Stephen David Harris legal expenses from seized cash.

Mr Harris had been preparing to board a flight to Colombia from Heathrow airport when he was found to be carrying US\$95,000. Mr Harris's account of the origin and purpose of the cash was considered unsatisfactory.

On April 21, 1998 the cash was seized. On April 25, an application for the continued detention of the seized cash was heard by Uxbridge Justices who granted a further detention of three months. On July 21, 1998, the court granted a further application for the detention of the seized cash for another three months. It also granted Mr Harris his legal expenses for defending the application and that was to be used from the detained cash held by the commissioners.

MR ANDREW BIRD for the commissioners; Mr Joel Clompass for Mr Harris.

MR JUSTICE FORBES said that there was no ambiguity or uncertainty in the statutory provisions in question, and the court did not need to have regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (1953, Cmd 8969).

His Lordship was satisfied that there was no proper basis for extending to magistrates a power to make any order for the release of any cash in the absence of any specific power to make such an order.

Magistrates courts were the creatures of statute and their powers were defined and limited by statute. It was wrong to imply a power where none existed.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE agreed. Solicitors: Solicitor, Customs and Excise; Saunders & Co.

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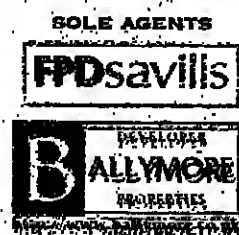
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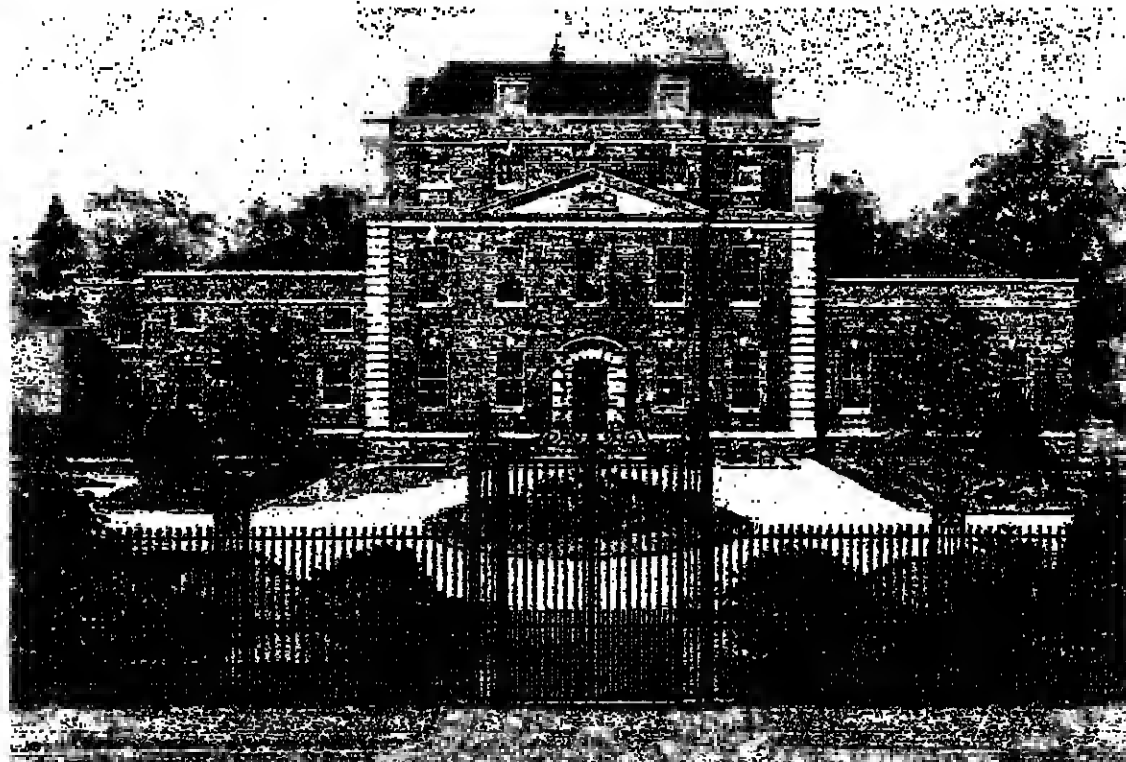


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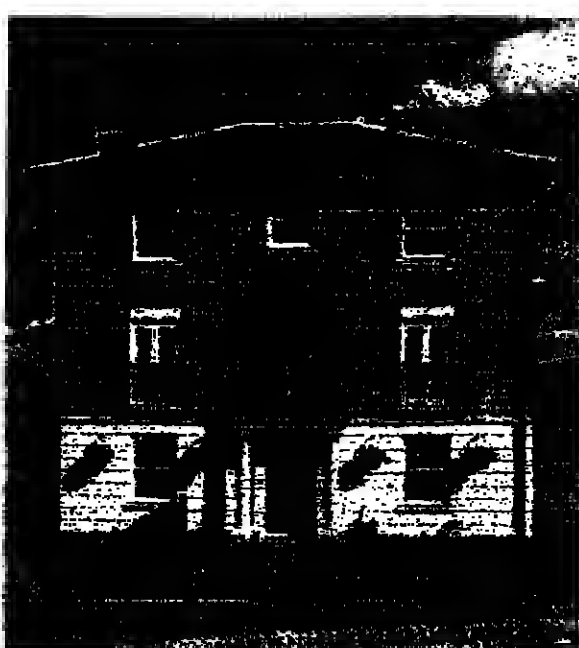
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DANCE

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Into his leap of honour

DANCE: Will Irek Mukhamedov's Don Juan presage his withdrawal from the stage? Interview by Allen Robertson

Today we are all warned not to expect a job for life. But dancers have known this all along. They understand that the physical demands of their trade mean they will be quitting the limelight at the very point when other professionals hit their stride.

Irek Mukhamedov turns 39 next week. Yet, far from heading for the scrapheap, the Russian ballet star is about to be handed that most coveted of all dance trophies: a new full-length role created for him. Starting at Sadler's Wells on Monday, Mukhamedov will be playing the title character in *The Return of Don Juan* for Arc Dance Company. The gusto of his performance looks set to dispel the doomday prophecies of a career in decline.

"I still dance 200 per cent every time," Mukhamedov insists. "Ballet is always young, but I have experience. I've been on stage for 20 years."

According to the choreographer Kim Brandstrup, the creative inspiration behind this new *Don Juan* is Mukhamedov's outsize talent. A comedy set in a modern film studio, it has a plot loosely based on a Danish radio play from the 1930s. That sparked off a similarly obscure Ingmar Bergman opus, *The Devil's Eye* (1960). *Don Juan*, briefly let out of Hell, sets his sights on a virginal ingenue, "the only girl of unassailable virtue left in the world". In trying to seduce her, the Don makes the calamitous mistake of falling in love for the first (and last) time. It is a perfect role for

Mukhamedov. Not only does he radiate masculine sexuality on stage, he also has an impish flair for comedy. "It is comic," he says, "but I hope the audience will cry a little bit too."

This is Mukhamedov's second created role for Arc: in 1994 he starred in Brandstrup's version of *Orlando*. In the interim, Brandstrup has

'The Royal Ballet survived without Rudolf Nureyev. It will survive without me'

choreographed for several big classical ballet companies, including the Royal Danish. Mukhamedov feels that this has helped Brandstrup's style to grow. "I wish I could be a choreographer," the Russian dancer says, "but I know it is impossible. When I try to choreograph I get a headache. So when someone makes a ballet for me, I feel honoured."

A young superstar with the Bolshoi Ballet, lauded for his dynamism in blockbusters such as *Spartacus* and *Ivan the Terrible*, Mukhamedov and his second wife left Moscow for London nine years ago. He joined the Royal Ballet, where he has been ever since. The choreographer Kenneth MacMillan doted on his

talents. No one so dramatically evoked the torment of Crown Prince Rudolf in *Mayerring*, the ballet Mukhamedov was dancing that night in 1992 when MacMillan died backstage. It was a blow for Mukhamedov. The dancer believes that he and the Royal's chief choreographer were forming a great partnership.

Today his future is in flux. From this season he is a guest with the Royal Ballet rather than a full-time member, and Mukhamedov feels that Covent Garden has cut him adrift. "I'm a dancer who needs to be a part of a company. To be a guest is to be on the outside. But the Royal Ballet will survive. It survived without Rudolf Nureyev. It will survive without Irek Mukhamedov."

His immediate future includes guest appearances in Japan, Russia and Germany. He and Anthony Dowell, the Royal Ballet's artistic director, have also worked out what he will be dancing (as a guest) once the company is back at Covent Garden next season. "I would like to dance as much as I can, as long as possible."

Away from the dance world he has the bedrock of his wife and two children, now eight and three. "When we finish talking now I will fly back to them in Bedfordshire. They will still be there when it is time to give up dancing, maybe sooner than I think. Who knows? I love driving. Maybe I could be a cabbie."

● *The Return of Don Juan* is at Sadler's Wells (0171-963 8000) from Monday to Wednesday, then tours nationally until April 16



Super trouper: at 39, Irek Mukhamedov still gives all his dancing "200 per cent"

No sex means no cigar

One way or another, it all comes down to sex. Without it, *Carmen* would be nothing but a common factory worker; without it, José would still be on the right side of the law and Micaela would be a happily married woman. And without it, we would not have our story. Didi Veldman's new ballet for Northern Ballet Theatre, unveiled at the Grand Theatre in Leeds on Monday, knows this. But somehow her *Carmen* cannot quite bring itself to express this fundamental truth.

And yet virtually everything else about Veldman's production (sponsored by Halifax plc) is in place. The staging is excellent — the story is told lucidly and quickly with a strong sense of purpose. The scenario, devised by the late Christopher Gable, reimagines the tale setting it in contemporary Rio de Janeiro, and that works just fine. The designs, by the estimable Lex Brotherston, capture the inner-city malaise of an industrial wasteland blighted by poverty and despair. The Bizet score, arranged by John Longstaff, is enthusiastically played by John Pryce-Jones and the Northern Ballet Theatre Orchestra. And Patricia Doyle's direction ensures excellent performances from a uniformly accomplished cast.

No, the problem is the choreography which, despite its plain-spoken energy, does not show us a full-blooded tale of fatal attraction. Veldman's strength is in her writing for the ensemble. She animates the stage in well-defined social observation: the gangsters and crooks have a restless bravado; the factory girls are trapped by boredom and futility; the police officers evince a wooden devotion to duty.

When the opportunity arises to have some fun, Veldman takes it. She enjoys reinventing Escamillo as a rock star, and getting raunchy as the tormented song is subjected to the full synthesized rock treat-

ment. Some of her vignettes are juicy, such as the robbery of two tourists by Carmen's gang, and Veldman responds well to the coarseness of Carmen's society, making clear that almost everything in it has its price. But the unisex democracy of the choreography works against Veldman when it comes to focusing on soloists. She doesn't have the language to make them special. She never fully establishes



Daniel de Andrade (José), Charlotte Broom (Carmen)

the overpowering physical connection between Charlotte Broom's Carmen and Daniel de Andrade's José, so that when their final confrontation arrives, it comes almost as a dramatic non sequitur. The awkward and evasive consummation scene in Carmen's bedroom is far from sizzling and Veldman seems so intent on portraying Carmen as a tomboy that poor Broom seems stuck in a perpetual adolescence. Broom is an impressive dance actress, but if the body language of the ballet is not screaming adult sexual allure, what is her Carmen to do?

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CHANGING TIMES

Bombast without bite

London has heard some fine performances of Mahler's mighty *Resurrection Symphony* recently, but none as overtly impressive as this account by Myung-Whun Chung with the London Symphony Orchestra. A packed Barbican Hall added to the sense of occasion, and with its concentration, vividness of orchestral playing and remarkably controlled singing it added up to something quite

CONCERTS

special. But ultimately this huge impression was not enough, and the performance's failure to be truly stirring pointed up the pitfalls of playing Mahler.

Youthful fling on the wild side

A TIME there was when Thomas Adès was only a pianist: a BBC Young Musician finalist, a career as a soloist certainly beckoned. But that would have limited him, so he became a composer, and developed, in rapid succession, parallel careers as a conductor and artistic director. Still in his twenties, he has been appointed artistic advisor to the Aldeburgh Festival. And as if to underscore his credentials as heir to the Britten legacy came this Wigmore concert of classical chamber music.

The comparison may be pertinent. Britten was an exceptional pianist, but especially an exceptional accompanist. Beethoven's vast, soul-searching *Ghost Trio* requires something more than musicianly genius. Of course, Adès has this in spades: he cannot fail to be interesting, and his piano playing has the inner conviction and understanding of the composer-pianist. He is so interesting, in fact, that Mitsuko Uchida herself came to hear him. But what must she, a pianist with a capital P, have made of it? From the blizzard of notes in the rushed opening, Adès led an exciting but hare-brained performance.

Admittedly, the excellent violinist Anthony Marwood — who would have given that vital shape to the ensemble — had flu, and was replaced by the fluent but often superficial Alexander Janacek. As Adès blazed forward, only cellist Louise Hopkins appeared to be trying to salvage an interpretation dragging them back in the Largo to make space for what should be hard-won cresc-

endos. Under Adès's hands the great descending scales disappeared in a wash of pedal, only to rear up suddenly accented at the finish.

More successful was the arresting Haydn E major Trio, FKV28. Here Adès could lead, and the ensemble followed. The intriguing opening in which pizzicato notes pin down the wings of spread piano chords had hints of transparency, though Adès lent high camp to the mock-Baroque Allegretto.

Marwood was too ill to play Bartók's *Contrasts* but rose heroically to a witty piece of Adès juvenilia, *Catch* (1991). This charming musical conceit casts the clarinetist (the fine Lynsey Marsh) as outsider, who must wander in and out looking for a way into a composition that fixes like the unwinding of clockwork toys. She is finally forgiven with an alluring lyric finale.

Another piece of theatre, Adès's *Life Story* (1994), on a droll tract of Tennessee Williams about one-night stands, strains to be a louche cabaret number (the ghost of Britten again) but really needs an untrained voice. Although Mary Carwe injected a degree of intimacy, this is a laboured setting over its asymmetric bass rumblings. Adès has moved on since, but a packed house lapped it up.

HELEN WALLACE

Masterpieces of this size are open to many different interpretations, but this one, coming at the end of the LSO education programme's enterprising *Discovery Day*, was a little too indulgent. Mahler is at least partly about touristic sound, intricate detail and vulgar bombast, and Chung, conducting from memory, conjured up all these with a sure hand. Yet he missed the work's more severe and unsettling side.

Even at the slow tempos he adopted, Chung's pacing was secure. He shaped the work's biggest span, the death-in-life idea that arches over the entire work, with a certainty that disguised the symphony's fragmented gestation. With its bristling tension, the opening promised much: as the movement developed a sense of both serenity and epic grandeur, all seemed to be in place for a compelling interpretation. But then Chung's relaxed speeds began to take their toll, and this funeral march became more funeral than march-like, hardly the *Allegro maestoso* that Mahler called for.

The dreamily escapist second movement, evoking the memory of a distant dance, turned out to be a slow-motion tour of a peasant hop with all the filth of the *Ländler* rhythms filtered out. The grim reality of the third movement was not really frightful enough, as the music's sardonic edge was softened by all too moderate tempos.

Strong vocal contributions put the performance back on course, especially the unearthly, disembodied entry of the Venetian Sara Mingardo in *Urlicht*. A true contralto, not a moonlighting mezzo, she sang with the glow of molten metal, and phrased seamlessly.

After an unsettled start, the Slovakian soprano Andrea Dankova also sang radiantly, showing off a small but glamorous voice. And the London Symphony Chorus, hushed at first and later full-throated, was on splendid form in the finale, which Chung controlled masterfully. The conductor's theatrical instinct showed in the way he steered it from the explosion of sound at the bursting of the graves towards an overwhelming climax.

JOHN ALLISON

Riding on the rhythm

DAVID MURRAY's recent projects have included everything from a collaboration with Senegalese musicians to an album celebrating his predilection for jamming with the Grateful Dead, so his Creole band, embracing the music of Guadeloupe, barely raises an eyebrow. Just two of the islands' percussionists, *ka drummers* François Landreseau and Klot Klavue on *ka drum* and congas, were actually present for this one-off appearance, but the American saxophonist let their playing form the basis of what he and his jazz-orientated colleagues played, rather than using it for a splash of rhythmic embellishment.

Klavue, indeed, provided Gédé, a rousingly percussive



JAZZ

opener with a rolling rhythm over which Murray, on tenor, and Baptist James Newton played an infectious theme. Pheeroan akLaff kept asserting the springy Caribbean rhythm while maintaining the supple looseness conducive to jazz improvisation. Throughout, both he and bassist Santi Debriano fulfilled this role with great aplomb, pounding out lively, dancing rhythms that could be embroidered by the two hand-drummers and, simultaneously, provide a platform for Murray's multi-textured saxophone and Newton's neat yet intense flute.

Even the introduction of Guy Konké did not faze the rhythm section. Konké used his forceful baritone to great effect, chanting and declaiming over the chattering percussion and blending his voice, call-and-response style, with both Murray and Newton. Whether he or Landreseau was singing, Murray's musical instincts ensured that the free adventurousness of the jazz element was allowed to flourish in this unusual setting.

CHRIS PARKER

مكتبة القرآن

In the namesake of comedy

Having never knowingly been in the company of anybody called Nuala, I found that this show allowed me to encounter three at the same time: two blonde and one brunette. It is the same distribution of hair tints that occurs in *Fascinating Aida*, so perhaps a showbiz rule requires all song-and-comedy girl three-somes to be coloured thus. Nuala (rhymes with bula) may or may not be their real names, but it is what they call one another. Not even Tall Blonde Nuala or Shorter Blonde Nuala; just Nuala. "Nuala," says another Nuala, "will now sing *Bridget the Bitch*." And Nuala begins, with Nuala and Nuala sharing the vocal backing or taking over from Nuala for verses two and three.

Becoming toggled out in mid-thigh frocks of pink plush, these Irish twentysomethings sweetly sing of grotesque misfortunes, set to a lilting tune of the sort more usually found associated with the scenic beauties of Tralee. There is Curly, for example, whose green head made her feel so unwanted at school, until the day came when teacher fell down dead on an excursion to the Burren and Curly saved her classmates from starvation by letting them chew her from the neck up. This self-sacrifice was duly recognised by Rome and now she is the patron saint of vegetable plots.

The Nualas have mastered the deadpan delivery, the devilish irony that soon entices an audience into their world where men are bastards — of course, that comes with the territory — but where their bastardly antics are unusual, even for men. The songs must be composed by the methods of free association: start with a cycling nun, exhaust her, send her to Lourdes to be healed, slip her into the Tour de France — "Go, Bridget, go!" — and so on to glory.

THEATRE
The Nualas
Duke Hall, W1

Likewise the astonishing riff by brunet Nuala, the one I first fixed in my mind as Scholarly Nuala, comparing a woman looking for a man to a jug of milk waiting on the kitchen table. Various cups of tea arrive, keen to mix, at they're all bastards, and as time passes the description of her souring contents becomes ever more graphic to counter this comical attack on men, there is the equally remarkable hymn in honour of the actor Donald Sutherland, not the most obvious subject for three girls in plush — "You're Canadian but we don't find you boring at all!"

At onetime the threesome looked as though each might stay within a consistent character role, the other two being Severe and Scatty. But though every Nuala continued to look stately at us and mutter complaints to her mike about the lighting, and though Scatty Nuala's hair became more tousled, any naive distinction between them would soon crumble. They share the narrative bits and the frank put-downs of showbiz celebs and each has a turn at introducing the songs with remarks sometimes as comic as what follows.

Anyon in the front rows dressed curiously will have these features curiously pointed out. Identities may be listed upon us, such as the fellow named as that great Irish jazz musician/helionous Mahoney from *Go Mead*. I laughed a lot, and when they skipped off behind the glittering backdrop for the last time, I was truly sorry to see them go.

JEREMY KINGSTON



The Nualas: consummate exponents of the deadpan delivery and the devilish irony, delivered in triplicate

Two double beddings

Two people, a record company A&R man and a personnel manager, meet in a shabby hotel miles from nowhere. After initial hostilities, and fuelled by drink, they spend the night together, paring as strangers. In a parallel universe the same thing happens. Exactly the same circumstances, exactly the same result. But these two people react both to circumstances and each other differently, and what happens in between the beginning and the end of their almost identical encounters takes a different turn. Meanwhile, in another parallel universe...

And so the merry-go-round goes on. In *Suspect Culture's* latest dissection of relationships among what used to be called Generation X, the late-twenty and thirtysomethings for whom nothing is ever easy. Taking its cue from their last major work, the brilliant *Timeless*, which looked at the secrets and lies between four

Mainspring
Sumner

friends, *Mainspring*, at the MacRobert Art Centre, peels back the layers of personal artifice even more (eavesdropping on late-night secrets and morning-after awkwardness we can all recognise. Ample enough exercise, but *Aspect Culture* like to make it difficult for themselves, at the dizzying permutations that result from having four actors play two characters leaves no avenue of intimacy unexplored.

Developed over a lengthy devising process, this is a typically intricate piece of work from the most adventurous, most in-your-face times theatre company in Britain. As David Greig's crisp script jump-cuts between first meeting to final pining, the effect is akin to *Sitting Ducks* as penned by Hald Pinter. The

four-strong acting ensemble of Callum Cuthbertson, Kate Dickie, Paul Thomas Hickey and Louise Ludge are kept on their toes as they switch between time zones as well as characters, while other liaisons are glimpsed in a second playing area.

But it is the director Graham Ealough who appears to have left his signature all over *Mainspring*. All the stylistic ticks from *Timeless* are here, including the heightened use of gesture and Nick Powell's gorgeously evocative soundscapes, but they are used to even more personal effect as *Mainspring* explores the secret lives that go on behind the mask of a profession. Where the repetition of the piece could grate, it hypnotises and seduces you deep into the heart of this *Brief Encounter* for the end of the century. Something very similar is probably going on in a hotel room near you right now.

NEIL COOPER

I made that bit up, admits Christine Molloy, one half of the performance duo *Desperate Optimists*, about her assertion that, just before he met that fatal icepick, Leon Trotsky had written the words "there must be another way".

It is a clear warning for the audience at *Play-Boy*, the company's tendentious evening of theatrical bricolage at the Project at the Mint, not to be too credulous. When it comes to history, you have to suspect your sources. But although Molloy and her partner, Joe Lawlor, are keen to offer such warnings, the pair still retain high expectations of their audience.

Play-Boy brings together chunks of other people's texts, videotaped interviews, a little marionette song and dance, some punfire and a whole lot of fake blood in an effort to connect some ostensibly disparate facts and events of 20th-century history.

But if the show involves out-lining intriguing and perplexing coincidences, *Desperate Optimists* are not joining up the dots for anyone. There

Linking and thinking

Play-Boy
Dublin

may be a few hints about the links between the testimony of the film director Elia Kazan at the McCarthy hearings and the riots that accompanied the original Abbey production of John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, but the show still leaves plenty of room for an audience's mental participation.

Some things do become clear as the music plays and gunshots ring out. Violence is one of the key elements that unite the company's chosen texts, whether it be in Molloy's account of the murder of Trotsky, the video witnesses' dis-

cussions or the frequent ear-rattling reports of blanks fired on stage. A link also appears to be made between violence, colonialism and isolation. But somehow it is only when the urge to join all the dots seems to wane that the facts seem to speak freely. This is not an approach that a company can take on lightly, all the less so if the intention is to create something more than a multimedia seminar in cultural studies.

But the company's challenge is to make their discussions hold up in front of an audience with relatively straightforward expectations: that is to say, they have to make an evening of talking about theatre into an evening of theatre.

In *Play-Boy* the company succeed in creating a bristlingly engaging evening of performance. The show does not ignore the straightforward pleasures of storytelling and pretending, but neither does it allow for any lapses of concentration, our promise easy rewards. A better definition of vital theatre would be hard to find.

LUKE CLANCY

RECOMMENDED TODAY

Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Marti Hargie

LONDON

BARTHOLOMEW FAIR: Laurence Olivier's jolly production of Ben Jonson's rumbustious comedy transfers from Epsom. Young Vic (0171-558 5263). Opens tonight, 7pm. In repertoire. (S)

ORFEO AND EURYDICE: Choreographer Martha Clarke returns to ENO to direct her 1987 production of Gluck's sublime retelling of the Greek myth. Counter-tenor Aris Stefanowicz sings Orpheus, with Margaret Richardson as Eurydice. Roy Goodman conducts. Coliseum (0171-552 8300). Opens tonight, 8pm. (S)

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: The eminent LSO Mezzel performs a double bill in two concerts where he is conductor, composer and soloist. On offer are the UK premiere of the *Musica for Violin and Orchestra*, with Mezzel as violin soloist, framed by pieces by Barok, Kreutzer and Tchaikovsky. Barbican (0171-552 8881). Tonight and tomorrow, 7.30pm. (S)

VIA DOLOROSA: Five performances only of David Hare's thoughtful and poignant account of a searching visit to Israel and Palestine. Aldeburgh (0171-359 4504). Opens tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: The versatile American soprano Cheryl Studer turns her attention to Richard Strauss as she joins the orchestra in a performance of the *Sinfonia in E-flat major* and *Träume* from *Capriccio*. Also on the programme is Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*. Judaea Hall (0171-552 4242). Tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

ELSEWHERE
BIRMINGHAM: Birmingham Royal Ballet opens the Hippodrome's new season with the jaunty, foot-lapping *Hobson's Choice*. David Bentley &



Orpheus and Eurydice returns to the Coliseum

family favourite is danced to the memorable melodies of Paul Reade. Hippodrome (0121-622 7488). Opens tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

MANCHESTER: The Talia Scholars under their founder and conductor Peter Phillips celebrate 25 years of distinguished vocal endeavour with an evening of choral music by the 16th-century composer Taverner. Bridgewater Hall (0161-907 9000). Tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

LIVERPOOL: The past 50th anniversary of the death of Richard Strauss and Viennese Nymph is marked with a concert by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Labor Peak. Works by both composers feature, including Strauss's rarely performed *Overtur* — concertino. Philharmonic Hall (0151-709 3749). Tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

NEW WEST END SHOWS

Jeremy Kingston's choice of theatre showing in London
■ House full, returns only ■ Some seats available ■ Seats at all prices

□ **GOODNIGHT CHILDREN EVERYWHERE:** Richard Maxwell's extraordinary account of a family's experiences after separation in the Second World War. Pic (0171-638 8891).

□ **THE NUALAS:** Irish all-girl satirical singing trio bring harmony, hilarity and a sharp look at humanity. See review, right. Arts Theatre (0171-437 8279).

□ **SHOCKHEADED PETER:** The Scissorman is back: wonderfully sinister show by the Cultural Industry team with the Tiger Lilies and Marilyn Jacques's brilliant sketch. Lync. W6 (0181-741 8701).

□ **AND THE BROTHER TWO:** Eamon Morrissey returns to the intimate comic writings of Flann O'Brien, revealing more about "Yankee" and his curious view of the world. Nicycle (0171-328 1000). (S)

□ **DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Mark Little makes his West End debut.

in Rob Beckett's new comedy, tracing the origins of the modernist movement back to the caves. Apollo (0171-494 5070).

□ **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** On Broadway hit comedy singing trio bring harmony, hilarity and a sharp look at humanity. See review, right. Arts Theatre (0171-437 8279).

□ **HOWIE THE ROOKIE:** Mark O'Hare's nightmare account of Dublin's vicious underworld leads. Mike Bradwell directs Adam Kelly and Karl Shaw. Apollo (0171-494 5070).

□ **LE CIO:** After ten years Declan Donnell directs Corneille's 1637 classic again, this time performed in French. English surtitles. Recycled on a vision of the Avignon Festival. Riverside (0181-237 1111). (S)

□ **COPENHAGEN:** Heisenberg mysteriously calls on Niels Bohr in western Denmark. Michael Frayn's enjoyably intelligent play transfers to the West End. Michael Bakelore. Duchess (0171-494 5070).

FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE

James Christopher's choice of the latest movies

NEW RELEASES

AFFLUENCE (15): Paul Schrader's bruising portrait of a frustrated cop in a small town. Nick Nolte and James Coburn put in powerful performances as father and son, caught in a cycle of male violence.

THIS YEAR'S LOVE (18): David Kavanagh's comedy about the messy sex Camden Town middle-classers of their love lives. With Kathy Burke, Jennifer Ehle, Douglas Henshall, Courteney Scott, Catherine McCormack and Ian Hart.

HOLY MAN (PG): Eddie Murphy's new guru and Jeff Goldblum's sleazy TV executive team up to sell inferior products on a shopping channel. Glibly stuff.

FOREIGN LAND (14): Strangely gripping underclass thriller about two young outcasts in Brazil and Lisbon. A triumph of quality over quantity. Directed by Walter Salles.

NEWS FROM THE GOOD LORD (14): Over the top French comedy from Didier Le Pécqueur. Sex warlords go looking for an Author. Some surreal patches of lunacy.

CURRENT

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL (PG): Roberto Benigni's romantic Second World War fable stretches a disturbing

comedy into the Holocaust. It's supremely well acted, but the comic treatment of survival in a death camp is at best nauseous.

YOUR FRIENDS & NEIGHBOURS (15): Nine brave young middle-class comedians of manner trace the arc of a life in a village. Truly comical. With Nicholas Baines. Available on video.

DON'T GO BREAKING MY HEART (15): A naive young girl who falls for a young man in a quiet village. Edwards star in a quiet village comedy where they actually do the occasionally decent. Available on video.

HIDEOUS KUNY (15): A naive young girl who falls for a young man in a quiet village. Edwards star in a quiet village comedy where they actually do the occasionally decent. Available on video.

A BUGS LIFE (U): A colony of ants, hard working ants are introduced by a butterfly queen of pink and grey. Dazzling, bug-eyed perspective from Disney and Pixar make it a comic feast for kids and adults alike. (Toy Story) Laserdisc direct.

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE (15): A young man about the struggling, hard working ants are introduced by a butterfly queen of pink and grey. Dazzling, bug-eyed perspective from Disney and Pixar make it a comic feast for kids and adults alike. (Toy Story) Laserdisc direct.

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OPERA & BALLET

COLISEUM (0171 552 8800)
ENGLISH OPERA
Tonight 8pm (8pm) 10pm (10pm)
Orpheus and Eurydice
Tonight 7.30pm LA TRAVIATA

ROYAL ALBERT HALL (0171 599 8212)
Spectacular New Production
Staged in the Round
TOSCA
Puccini's Passionate Tale of Love and Betrayal. Sung in English
"Singing out" Evening Standard
Electric, Sexy and right on Song Times
Tonight: 7.30pm, 9.30pm
Nightly at 7.30pm
Sat/Sun 2.30pm (all part 1st)

GALATHEE WELLS (0171 552 8800)
Pacific Northwest Ballet
A company of new
Artistic: S. Tins
Great American Choreographers
22-24 Feb
A Midsummer Night's Dream
25-27 Feb

THEATRES
ACTS (0171 552 2122)
Howard Crompton
When Pigs Fly
A swinging musical extravaganza
Tue-Fri 8pm Sat 8pm & 8.30pm Sun 8pm
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PARIS GALLERIES

The genius of Rothko

ARTS

LONDON GALLERIES

Russian curiosities

Long, dazed journey into night

VISUAL ART:

Richard Cork
on important
Paris shows
devoted to the
genius of Rothko
and Hockney

Only a year before he committed suicide in 1970, Mark Rothko made the Tate Gallery an exceptionally handsome gift of nine major paintings. Apart from reflecting his love of Turner's most sublime work, the donation conveyed Rothko's gratitude to a country where his art had already enjoyed warm admiration. Now, however, the great Rothko retrospective already shown in Washington and New York has bypassed London and ends its tour in Paris. So British devotees of Rothko's luminous, transcendent vision must make a pilgrimage to the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, where long queues brave the winter winds to pay homage to a master of Modernism.

To judge by the awed faces at the exhibition, visitors find Rothko well worth the wait. I would go further. This is an exceptionally moving show, installed with lucid simplicity and select enough to avoid the risk of lapsing into monotony. Rothko's output was immense, and a large survey might easily make him look repetitive. Here, however, the organisers stop well short of overkill. And they are not afraid of revealing how long he took to discover his identity as an artist.

Emigrating from his native Russia at the age of nine, the young Marcus Rothkowitz had good reason to feel insecure. His father died in 1914, only two years after the family settled in Portland, Oregon. To help to overcome the ensuing hardship, Rothko was obliged to sell newspapers in the street. It was a miracle that he did well enough at school to win a bursary to Yale University, but no surprise that he left before obtaining a degree. Already prey to the highly strung temperament that plagued him throughout life, he studied painting in New York instead.

Rothko struggled for the next two decades to find his voice. A forlorn series of Manhattan subway paintings, each stressing urban alienation, indicate just how isolated he must have felt. Only with hindsight can we see how the stark, planar organisation of these subterranean images prophesies the structure he would favour in his mature work.

After 1940, when he began to exhibit under the name of Rothko, a new feeling of solidarity emerged in the New York avant-garde. He met Clifford Still and Jackson Pollock, who shared his desire for extreme renewal. But the paintings he produced in the war years, riddled with mythological references and titles as mysterious as *The Omen of the Eagle*, seem fussy and starved of the epic, sensuous vision he would discover later.

The true breakthrough occurred only around 1948, when Rothko realised that he should discard all his unwieldy and obscure references to the past. Concentrating narrowly on a few elements only, and unafraid to purge his canvases of all irrelevant details, he gradually discovered how to let bands, lozenges and strips of smouldering colour float on the picture surface. His brushwork became blurred, allowing his pigment to grow as vaporous as a cloud. And each component, whether as thin as a line or as looming as a land-mass, is allowed space to assert its own character.

From 1950 until his tragic death,

Rothko's art is essentially abstract. But we cannot help seeing in these great veils of orange, red, black, yellow or maroon a host of possible references to the visible world. The division between one element and its neighbour often resembles a horizon. We feel alone in the immensity of a bare landscape, gazing towards a sky suffused with the last, brilliant flare of waning light. Windows are evoked as well, capacious enough to encompass the vastness of an elemental view beyond.

No figures can be detected in Rothko's mature work, but it never feels impersonal. Even at their largest and most enveloping, his paintings seem surprisingly intimate. They relate very directly to our own experience of the world, although

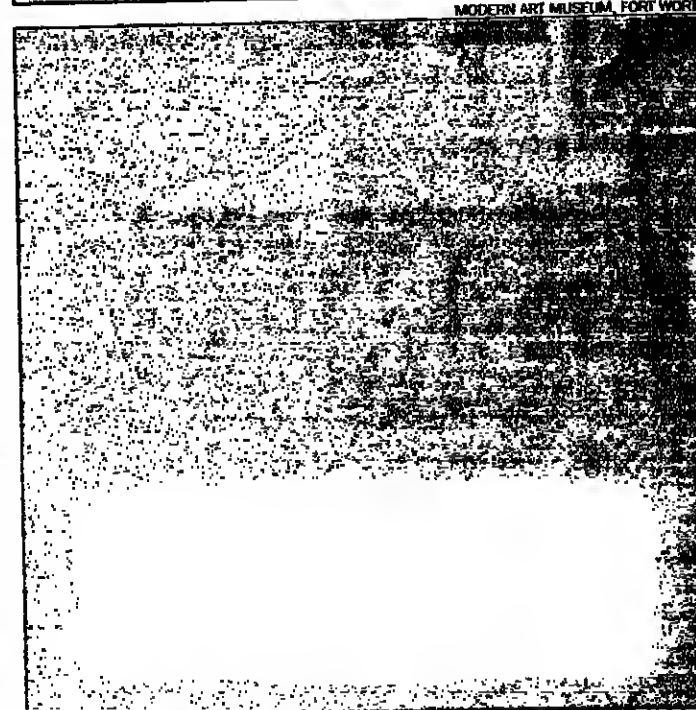
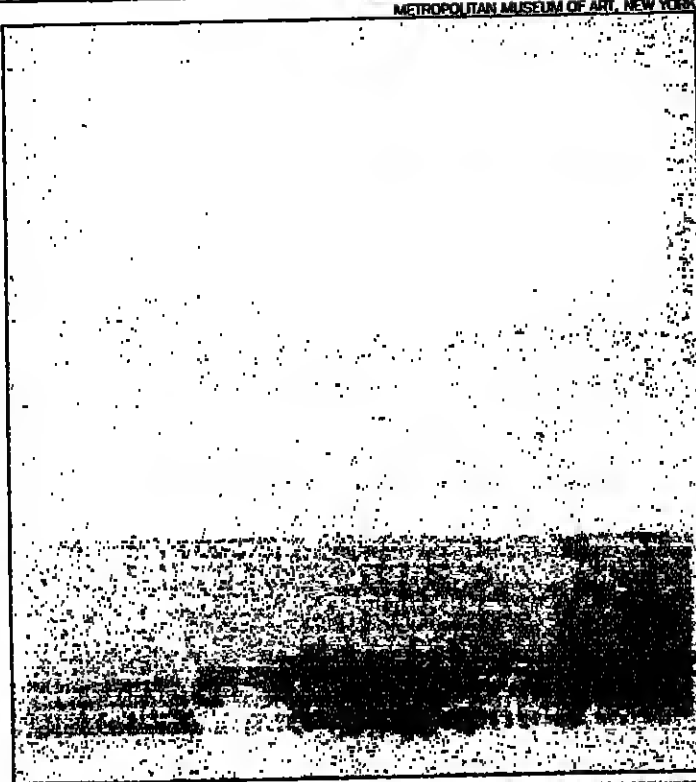
Rothko constantly succeeds in conveying a sense of cosmic, unfathomable strangeness.

The depression that finally overwhelmed him is disclosed with terrifying candour in the last room. Restricted now to a dour combination of black and muddy grey or brown, Rothko confronts utter negation. Darkness has descended, seemingly for ever. He could find no pathway out of the gloom, and the final

paintings are pitifully demoralised. Their pessimism is all the more shocking when compared with the boundless aspiration of the paintings he produced at his zenith.

After this, it is a relief to find David Hockney: *Space/Landscape* at the Pompidou Centre. Displayed in temporary rooms, while most of the building is closed for extensive renovation, the survey commences with a witty 1962 painting. Here a demonic young Hockney and his friends refuse to look out of the car window as they race crazily through Switzerland en route to Florence. Since then, though, he has stared at his surroundings more and more intently.

Some of his finest 1967 Californian poolscapes are here, including *A Bigger Splash*, and by 1970 he depicts two friends gazing as if spellbound towards converging avenues of trees in a Vichy park. Two years later, Hockney painted the most seductive canvas on show here: a luminous, melting view of Mount Fuji, its liquid forms contrasted with the precision of a single flower isolated in a foreground vase. His subsequent fascination with fractured, distancing perspectives inspired by Cubism has led him to far more restless images. *Pearlblossom Highway*, shimmering in the Californian desert, is



Well worth a pilgrimage to Paris: works by Mark Rothko in all his moods, both vibrant and gloomy, dating from 1949 to 1958

made from hundreds of colour photographs painstakingly assembled into a coherent view. The result is like a shattered mosaic, reconstructing pieces by piece.

And it paves the way for an even more epic, multipart photographic collage of the Grand Canyon. Originally taken in 1932, these images now form the basis of two colossal

canyon paintings executed last year. Displayed here at either end of the long final room, they are a tour de force of sustained, eye-bending observation.

● Mark Rothko at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (00331 55674000) until April 18; David Hockney: *Space/Landscape* at Centre Pompidou (00331 44781233) until April 26

AROUND THE LONDON GALLERIES

In the dingy deeps of the dirty old city

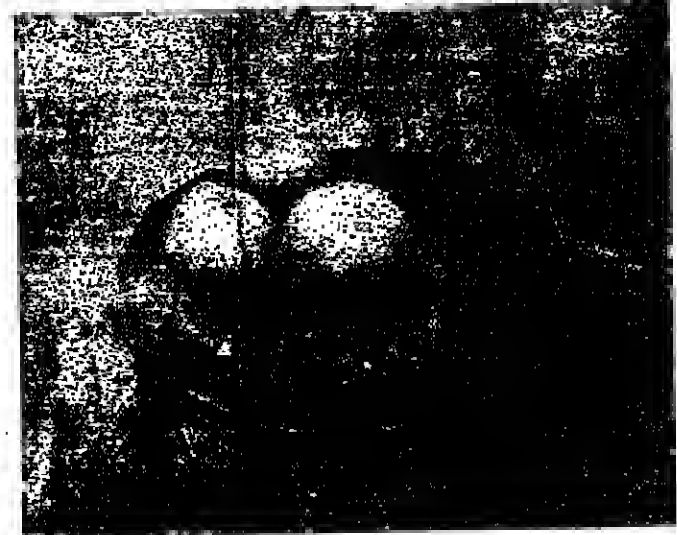
David Hepher is a landscape painter. Every summer he takes off to southern France, to romantic sunlit regions around Toulouse. For the rest of the year, as head of painting at the Slade School of Art, he works in London. The cityscape becomes his subject — but not the pomp and splendour of the tourist brochure. Hepher captures the type of urban landscape you might glimpse as you crawl through the bowels of the capital on a train. His subject is the bland reality of the high-rise housing estate, the 1960s dream gone wrong.

Against layered concrete and timber shuttering, tall rectangles cut stark geometries intended to echo the abstractions of Mondrian and De Stijl. As a teacher, Hepher flashes his art-historical credentials. Between a tower and a graffiti-scrawled fence, Piero della Francesca's view of Arezzo is quoted. A glimpse of El Greco's moonlit Toledo crouches in a corner. But the soulless atmosphere of these works belongs to an altogether more contemporary age. Stains seep, graffiti sprawls, paint overflows like a blocked drain.

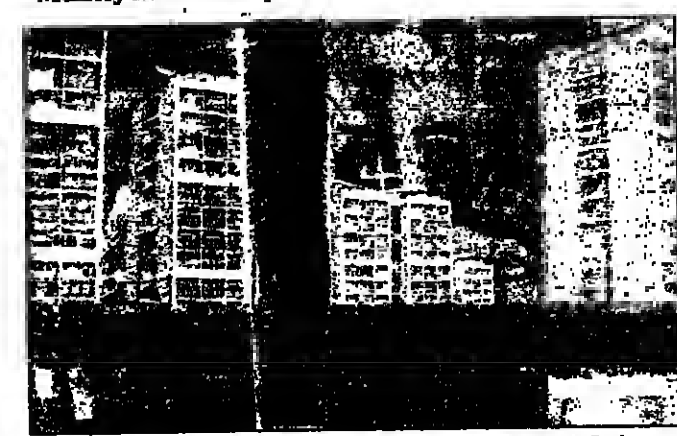
Flowers East 199-205 Richmond Road, E8 (0181-985 3333) until Monday

□ AFTER a suicidal period of depression and a long, slow haul to stability, is Cork Street back aloft at last, bobbing on the currents of contemporary art? The Holly Nahmad Gallery, which opened last year, is shortly to display the work of some of the most established names on the scene. And last week Robert Sondheim opened its doors onto a stylish new space at Number Five.

The art of the Russian painter and theatre designer Yuri Kuper forms the mainstay of Sondheim's first show. The viewer steps into a cabinet of curiosities, into a



Memory lane: Russian painter Yuri Kuper's *Apples on a Plate*



David Hepher's *Study for Brandon Flats with Blue Stripe*

poetic realm collage from scrounged bric-a-brac. Antique copperplate writing, flowing newsprint, old tins and stencils and daguerreotype plate become part of the surfaces on which muted, textured tones of pain are layered and left to settle, like the dust of old memories. There is a sense that nothing has been stirred for years, that flowers might have been found pressed between the leaves of a Victorian Bible, that been trodden for some 10 years. Kuper recreates the stillness of some Miss Heisham's world.

This clashes strongly with the show in a downstairs gallery dedicated to up-to-the-minute art. Here Micha Klein's gassy tableau of camp fairies josts for attention with a typically painterly Jack Yeats, or the squinty squares of a Bridget Riley. And maze-like lithographs by Louise Bourgeois appear to have been chosen more for the name of the artist

than the merit of the work, this does little to detract from an otherwise fresh, heterogeneous show. Robert Sondheim, 5 Cork Street, W1 (0171-439 1001) until April 9

□ Arabella Caecia is vivacious and expressive. She managed to spill a cup of coffee over Nicola Rae on the day that they first met. Nicola maintained a characteristic serenity. But if the personalities of these two artists are different, their works are both rooted in the earth. Sifting and funneling ground-down soil into Perspex boxes, Rae creates wonderfully tranquil pieces which surprise and soothe. Caecia is more dramatic. The hot landscapes of South Africa are the starting point for swirling meditations on spirituality and myth.

New Burlington Street Gallery, W1 (0171-267 2466) until Saturday

RACHEL CAMPBELL-JOHNSTON

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament
MARK ROSENBLATT

Age: 21

Profession: Director

Education: St Paul's and Oxford. "So predictable."

Beginnings: Directing *Dr Faustus* at school at 16 with a £600 budget. "That's the joy of going to a rich institution."

Oxford education: He mounted productions of *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, *Ghetto*, *Peer Gynt*, *Someone to Watch over Me*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Save*.

Useful experience: "I acted at school and university, which was good grounding for a director."

Big break: He is assisting John Crowley, the director of *Macbeth*, starring Rufus

Sewell and Sally Dexter, arriving at the Queen's Theatre tonight.

Straight to the top, then? He was spotted by Thelma Holt, producer of *Macbeth*, while at Oxford. Holt was Cameron Mackintosh, Professor of Contemporary Theatre there in his final year. She also saw his touring production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Japan.

Eastern promise: "We went to Kyoto, Osaka and Tokyo, where we performed at the Globe — it's carpentered, a combination of authenticity and middle-class comfort. All the venues were very different, and I had to redirect and let the actors grow into it. I learnt to be philosophical — I didn't much like the show myself."

Royal command: "The Crown Prince and Princess came to the Tokyo Globe and I sat in a box with them."

Any mentors besides Thelma Holt? Richard Eyre was her predecessor at Oxford. "I went to the National Theatre's studio with my *Peer Gynt* company. We did an acting workshop with Fiona Shaw, voice sessions and singing."

What does "assisting" on *Macbeth* entail? "I rehearse the understudies and do little bits when the director asks

me. It's a brilliant learning experience."

Training: "There's a shameful lack of formal training for directors in this country. The best way to learn is through practical experience and I've been lucky."

Future plans: "I'm hoping to direct a show in a regional theatre studio, but I can't talk about it yet. Then, sometime, I may have a go at starting my own company."

HEATHER NEILL



Mark Rosenblatt: spotted by Thelma Holt while at Oxford

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SOUTH KOREA

FOCUS

Michael Knipe presents a four-page report on the economy, finance and investment taking place in South Korea

Spirit of revival ready to greet Queen's visit

South Korea marks the first anniversary of President Kim Dae Jung's term of office tomorrow with preparations under way in Seoul, the capital, for an eagerly awaited state visit by the Queen in April.

There are hopes that this royal occasion will set the seal on the country's remarkably speedy turnaround from the financial crisis it suffered when it was forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$58.35 billion (£38.3 billion) loan. That was in December 1997, after four decades of astonishing growth averaging 8 per cent a year.

Today the shock of the economic collapse is still apparent. Unemployment rates are expected to rise still further. But the belief is strong that the worst may be over.

There have been a series of indicators in the past few weeks that the programme of radical reforms introduced during the past year by the Kim Dae Jung administration are having the desired effect.

"Today our usable foreign exchange reserves exceed \$50 billion," said Mr Lee Kyu Sung, the Minister of Finance and Economy. "In 1997 they had sunk to \$4 billion so we have achieved a very dramatic increase."

Mr Lee highlighted other firm signs of revival: the exchange rate against the dollar, which a year ago spiralled to 1,950 won, has stabilised at around 1,170 won. Foreign



Foreign Minister Hong

exchange reserves, which had dwindled to \$3.8 billion, are now at a record high of \$50 billion. Interest rates have dropped dramatically from almost 30 per cent to about 8 per cent and inflows of foreign direct investment last year totalled \$8.9 billion — a record.

In December, Seoul began repaying its IMF loan with an amount close to \$4 billion, the clearest indication yet, in the eyes of Hubert Neises, the IMF's director for the Asia and Pacific department, that South Korea's balance of payments crisis is over. "It is premature to open the champagne," said Hong Soon Young, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with a wry smile. "The economy is not completely out of

the turmoil. It is in the midst of restructuring. And restructuring, half finished, can be an invitation to another round of economic crisis.

"So this is no time for complacency or too much optimism. The rules of a free market economy are not firmly in place in the minds and behaviour of the economic players. I believe it will take at least another one or two years before we have the vitality and momentum for economic growth."

Nevertheless, in spite of these words of caution, there is no doubt that the Kim Dae Jung administration believes it is on the right path.

South Koreans are a modest people by nature, an ancient society overshadowed internationally by their richer Japanese neighbours and their more numerous Chinese ones.

There are few obvious signs of the economic depression in Seoul, largely destroyed during the war with the North in the 1950s and now a modern capital of unlovely 1960s and 1970s monumental architecture, cut through by ten and twelve-lane motorways, and relieved only by a few elegant palaces from past eras. Pedestrians have been all but banished to underground shopping malls and cross-street passages.

However, the city has a thriving dynamism. Platoons of elegantly uniformed receptionists are on hand in all official buildings, with numerous counter assistants, sim-



There are few signs of economic depression in Seoul: in some city stores staff wear clothes that are more chic than in Knightsbridge

larly attired, in modern department stores more chic, if anything, than their Knightsbridge and Fifth Avenue counterparts.

Bustling side-street shopping centres and street markets are open late and a modern and highly efficient underground and railway system is manned by staff as smartly dressed as military generals.

The Queen's visit will be her first to the Korean peninsula. It was pencilled in on her prospective agenda well before the financial crisis occurred. At that time, Korea's star was burning bright. It had the eleventh-largest economy in the world — ahead of Russia, Australia and India — and was the world's twelfth-largest trading nation. With a population of 46 million it had a

per capita income of \$10,000 and, in economic terms, it was the biggest country that the Queen had not visited.

As a result of the financial crisis, it has probably slipped down the economic league table somewhat over the past 15 months but what South Korea has lost in terms of its economic standing it has made up for in its democratic progress.

When the presidency passed to Kim Dae Jung, it was the first time that power had been transferred peacefully and democratically in Korea for 50 years.

So the case for the royal visit to go ahead in April is, if anything, stronger: it will show that Britain is not just a fair-weather friend and will demonstrate support for the

democratic changes that have occurred.

Relations between the two countries have been traditionally warm and they have been further enhanced by the fact that, during his days as political dissident, President Kim Dae Jung spent a year in Cambridge in 1993, based at his graduate college, Clare Hall. While at Cambridge he was a popular figure, befriended by his neighbour Professor Stephen Hawking — and he has since stated publicly that this period in his life was highly instrumental in what was, in effect, part of his preparation for high office.

Koreans will see the Queen's visit as a tribute to their democratic and economic reforms. This is considered particularly fitting as the struc-

tural reforms and free market ideology of the Thatcher years are held in high regard in Seoul.

"We are using Britain as a role model in seeing what government agencies can be delegated to the private sector," said Dr Kim Dong, Senior Secretary to the President for Policy and Planning Affairs. "We hope the British experiment can be repeated in Korea. We firmly believe that the systematic and long-sustained reform can produce sustained growth as it did in Britain."

For Koreans, said Mr Hong, the Queen represents British values. "So this is how we appreciate Her Majesty and, particularly as this is her first visit, she will be assured of a hugely enthusiastic welcome."

Chaebols must reform

The top five chaebols, the family orientated conglomerates that dominate the South Korean economy, are now the prime targets of the Seoul Government as it presses ahead with the latest stage of its programme to reform the country's fortunes: corporate restructuring.

The five — Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo, LG Group (formerly Lucky Goldstar) and the SK Group (formerly Sunkyong) — together with about 50 smaller chaebols, were for several decades the primary engines of growth for the South Korean economy. However, their numerous and diverse subsidiaries, which borrowed and spent recklessly — amid frequent accusations of corruption — are widely blamed for bringing the country to its knees economically.

Under pressure from President Kim Dae Jung's administration, the top five chaebols agreed in December to undertake a series of reforms including putting up for sale their marginal and unprofitable units and to focus their activities more directly on their core sectors. But the battle of wills between the Government reformers and the chaebol tycoons is not over.

"Several of the top figures own only 5 or 6 per cent of their conglomerate's shares but act as if they own 100 per cent, and are resisting the reforms the Government is introducing," says Dr Yoo Jong Keun, the Governor of the North Cholla Province and a senior economic adviser to President Kim Dae Jung. "That can no longer be tolerated. For some the overriding concern is to maintain control of their businesses but some will be in danger of losing it."

Dr Yoo, a former economics professor at Rutgers University, is an influential figure in the President's team of reformers and describes himself as "public enemy No 1, as far as the chaebols are concerned".

The top five have committed themselves to shedding 91 of their subsidiaries through mergers, liquidations and sell-offs to foreign business interests. They have also undertaken to repay external debts owed by other subsidiaries to improve their financial standing.

"Last year we devised a very specific plan to restructure the top five chaebols," says Lee Ki Song, the Minister of Finance and Economy. "This year we are making sure the plan will be implemented on schedule. We are determined to ensure that they concentrate on their core areas of competence, that they do not digress from this and that they achieve a debt ratio of 200 per cent by the end of the year. At present the top chaebols have an average of 27 subsidiaries each. And each one

of them is running businesses in some 20 different industries. We are determined that this kind of diversification will 'disappear' and when it does I expect Korean companies to re-emerge in the international market with much improved competitiveness."

The three other areas affected by the reform programme are the public labour and financial sectors.

In the public sector five of 24 non-financial state-owned enterprises have been privatised in stages this year and another six will be

by 2002 including Korea Telecom and the Korea Electric Power Corporation, as well as 76 subsidiaries. The process will involve cutting the labour force by 30,000, a 21 per cent fall.

"We are not going to stop there," says Dr Kim Tae Dong, the Senior Secretary to the President for Policy and Planning Affairs. "All government ministries are under man-

agement review by outside teams of consultants. No other country has attempted this kind of reform. The purpose will be to decide which government agencies can be delegated to the marketplace."

A campaign to eliminate excessive regulations has so far scrapped about half of nearly 12,000 existing rules.

According to Kang Bong Kyun, Senior Secretary to the President for Economic Affairs, the economic restructuring programme should be completed this year and the economy should return to normal growth next year. But, he says, it will be another three years before the country regains the \$10,000 per capita income levels it had before the onset of the financial crisis.

Reforms are helping to revive the country's fortunes

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Reforms are helping to revive the country's fortunes



Executive suite: former company chief Suh Sang Rok training to be a waiter at a Seoul hotel

Tycoon works for tips

Despite signs of economic recovery, unemployment in South Korea is at its highest since monthly statistics were first compiled 16 years ago. It is expected to rise to two million this year — more than 8 per cent of the workforce.

Job losses have hit every level. These are explosive statistics in a society that, even under a series of authoritarian regimes, became internationally notorious for violent strikes and demonstrations.

One of the Kim Dae Jung administration's first steps was to pass legislation allowing businesses to lay off workers. For Koreans, who had taken lifetime employment for granted, it was a dramatic step away from traditional practices.

At 62, Suh Sang Rok felt he was secure as vice-chairman of the Samsung Group, once the country's 26th-largest conglomerate. But in the turmoil of the economic crisis, he lost his job and so went on a waiter's training course at a large hotel in Seoul.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The new laws provoked a strike at the Hyundai Motor Corporation that became a test case. Resolved after a month by a programme of lay-offs, unpaid leave and early retirements, it was seen as a significant victory for greater industrial labour flexibility.

The Government also created a tripartite commission comprising representatives of trade unions, industrial management and the Government to handle labour relations. But, with the unemployment rate increasing, the prospect of more industrial unrest is looming. Angry union activists have criticised the Government and corporate heads for unilaterally laying off workers in the name of restructuring.

"The trouble is that you cannot make unemployment disappear. There is no such solution," says Dr Yoo Jong Keun, an economic adviser to the President. "The UK has been through this. What

we are having to do is direct our efforts to extending the welfare safety nets so that our unemployed are not destitute."

Last year the Government spent \$8.5 billion extending welfare benefits, says Dr Kim Man Il, Minister of Health and Welfare, and her budget this year will increase by 25 per cent. "We are placing the emphasis on improving welfare benefits and retraining people for new jobs in new sectors."

Shelters have been set up for the homeless unemployed, and dole pay-outs extended from three to six months. Public work projects have been created and retraining programmes developed.

The relative absence of serious labour unrest in the past year, as Koreans rallied to support the Government in the face of an economic crisis, was an important element in the recovery.

Foreign investment was another but, if labour unrest occurs now, it will be very difficult to attract more foreign money.

INVESTMENT

British Investments. PowerGen UK is investing \$210 million in LG Energy, a subsidiary of the LG Group, to build a 528 megawatt gas-fired combined-cycle gas turbine plant at Asan Bay in South Chungcheong Province. It will be the first power plant constructed in Korea by a private company. And British Aerospace has won a £46 million contract from the South Korean navy to develop and produce the combat management system for three 5,000-tonne South Korean destroyers. Meanwhile, Tesco is setting up a joint venture firm with the marketing division of Samsung.

"In the past Korea did not pay attention to the need for foreign investment," said Park Tae Young,

the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Energy. In 1996 it was only 2.4 per cent of GDP compared with more than 20 per cent in the UK. But since the extent of the financial crisis became apparent the public had come to realise that it was an imperative element of economic recovery.

Attracting foreign investment is now a top priority and the Government has shifted the direction of policy towards promoting rather than regulating it. The types of business eligible for tax reduction or exemption has been expanded from 265 to 533 and foreign investment zones have been established in which incentives are offered to foreign investors who create new business.

At present foreign investors receive benefits only when their indi-

Reign of the bank-tamer

FINANCE

Lee Hun Jai is diminutive in stature and — wearing a navy blue cardigan in his office in the centre of Seoul — he projects a mild and charming demeanour. Yet Mr Lee is the Korean Government's chief financial hatchet man, charged with ending decades of collusion between banks and chaebols, the family-orientated conglomerates which dominate the South Korean economy.

Since April last year he has forced the closure of five Korean banks, the merger of four others, closed down 16 merchant banks and four life insurance companies.

Dozens of finance companies have been shut down and the banking sector was ordered to shed a third of its workforce — 40,000 people.

Mr Lee currently has seven more insurance companies in his sights and expects to move house and stay in hotels close down at least three of them. Naturally, he said, there had been lots of resistance to such closures.

It was, after all, the first time in Korean history that such a thing had happened. Everyone believed that banks would never go under because they had the Government behind them.

However, a year ago the economic collapse coincided with the election of a new Government which imposed a programme of radical economic reform.

Mr Lee does not make a big thing of it but, according to his staff, the responses to his actions were so threatening, initially, that, for safety, he moved discreetly out of his house and into his wife's art studio and various hotels.

The authority Mr Lee exerts

stems from the fact that he is chairman of the South Korea Finance Supervisory Commission, the Government's watchdog body responsible for ensuring that Korea's banking and financial services comply with international standards of probity and transparency.

Since November 1997, said Mr Lee, \$0.9 trillion won (about \$40 billion) had been spent on restructuring the financial sector, including nearly 20 trillion won on the purchase of 44.1 trillion won worth of non-performing loans held by financial institutions.

A good start had been made, he said, but much more needed to be done. One of the most important things he said, was to change the mind-sets of the banking management who had worked so long in an environment in which, under the umbrella of government protection, financial institutions had indulged in questionable lending practices.

Reckless lenders had been paired with reckless borrowers. Chaebols pursued excessively leveraged expansion based on a "too-big-to-fail" theory.

The cosy relationship between the banks and chaebols was revealed when the Hanbo Group — one of the 15 biggest industrial concerns — collapsed in January 1997. A loans-for-bribes scandal emerged and a rash of bankruptcies ensued.

Mr Lee is now focusing his attention on corporate restructuring. The measures being used include the phasing out of cross guarantees, the reduction in debt to equity ratio, debt workouts with bank creditors, reductions of affiliates and the elimination of excess capacity.

There had been much progress in restructuring the small and medium sized groups, he said, but this was proving more difficult with the big five — Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo, LG and SK — whose structures and affiliations were extremely complex.

The big five sold 35 affiliates to foreign companies last year and have stated that they will dispose of another 91 of their subsidiaries through mergers, liquidations and sell-offs to foreign business interests this year.

He has urged the creditors of the big chaebols to force financial reform during the first half of this year. If the chaebols failed to reform themselves, the Government would force through the necessary changes, he said. It would take time but, he predicted, by the end of this year it would have been achieved fundamentally.

The net losses of Korean banks last year hit a record high of 14.48 trillion won compared with losses of 3.88 trillion in 1997.



Lee Hun Jai: threats made him move house and stay in hotels

Friends or foes?

Michael Knipe reports on a pale glint of sunshine

If you use a pair of binoculars to peer through the winter mist across the demilitarised zone between South and North Korea, you can just make out the shape of a North Korean border guard in a watchtower, staring back. This, the world's most fortified border, dividing the Stalinist North from the democratised South, is one of the last remnants of the Cold War.

A South Korean soldier points out the buildings of Kungdong which, he says, is a fake North Korean village. There are no fires and no laundry hung out to dry.

When the wind is blowing in the right direction the North Koreans occasionally dispatch balloons carrying leaflets extolling the virtues of their President, Kim Jong Il. But the confrontation along the demilitarised zone (DMZ), just 27 miles north of Seoul, is, at present, mostly uneventful.

The most recent North Korean defector to cross over made his move five months ago and there has been no shooting across the border for at least a year. North Korean propaganda, which used to blast across the DMZ through huge speakers for 18 hours a day, now spouts forth for no more than five hours a day. "That's because the North is so short of electricity," says Corporal Park Min Woo.

The shortage of electricity, like the rash of attempted escapes across North Korea's northern border into China, are signs of the desperate economic plight of the Pyongyang regime and are of great concern to President Kim Dae Jung's Government in Seoul.

On taking office, the South Korean President embarked on a "sunshine policy" aimed at achieving peace on the Korean peninsula through reconciliation and co-operation with the Pyongyang Government. Opposition critics fear that in the face of the North's development of long-range missiles

and a suspected nuclear facility, this approach may prove to be nothing better than a policy of appeasement.

The Government in Seoul rejects this. Hong Soon Young, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, says: "Our policy is that the North Korean regime must be warned sternly of the penalties they face over such provocations, but that these should be seen in the context of inter-Korean relations and in no circumstances should there be overreaction. There should be no black or white reactions to acts of provocation. This is what diplomacy is all about."

Instead Seoul is trying to promote what it describes as an atmosphere which will help Pyongyang to start reform of its own volition. It is actively pushing for South-North co-operation and exchanges. There are indications of positive change of a limited but distinct nature, says Mr Hong. The regime is lessening its state of isolation and showing signs of taking account of market forces.

Kim Hyung Kee, the head of unification policy at the Ministry of Unification, points to the

Government's policy of allowing private-sector exchanges across the border. The most spectacular of these was orchestrated and then led by Chung Ju Yung, 83, the founder and honorary chairman of Hyundai, the largest of Korea's conglomerates.

Last June he became the first South Korean civilian to enter North Korea across the DMZ at Panmunjom. Accompanied by TV cameras, he took with him 500 head of cattle which, it was hoped, would help to improve North stock. A gift to the people of his native Jungchon district, the animals were transported on 50 trucks specially built by Hyundai for the trip and also donated to the North. On his return, Mr Chung sent a further 500 head of cattle and donated 50,000 tons of grain, spending a total of \$8.5 million on the venture.

In November, Mr Chung began offering South Koreans cruise trips through the East Sea to view Mount Kumgang (Diamond Mountain), a North Korean peak of great symbolic significance to Koreans. The passengers were the first South Korean tourists to

visit the North since the peninsula was divided half a century ago.

One of the passengers reported that the sightseeing area they visited was extremely limited and that they were not allowed to deviate from the designated course. They had no opportunity to make contact with North Koreans. The few people they saw beyond the barbed wire were expressionless and indifferent to them "as if we weren't there".

In spite of these drawbacks, Mr Chung has more ambitious plans. The Hyundai Group has obtained exclusive rights from the Pyongyang regime to develop tourist facilities on and around Mount Kumgang. It plans to invest \$397 million by the end of next year to build ski resorts, golf courses, condominiums and hotels. Hyundai has already paid \$2.4 million to the North from the Mount Kumgang entrance fees. Hyundai is also drawing up a masterplan for the development of an industrial complex covering with a total area of 66 million square metres on the west coast of North Korea.



Warriors and peacekeepers: soldiers at the border and Chung Ju Yung with his cattle

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DRIVING THE DREAM

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Jennifer Veale reports from Seoul on an imminent political dogfight, while Ruth Taplin examines the benefits of UK-Korean business deals

Editorial

Kim Dae Jung, the South Korean President, starts his second year in office this week, a turning point which looks certain to mark the end of his honeymoon with some old-fashioned political brawl.

During an impressive debut year, the former dissident has won respect worldwide for his determination to implement a political agenda aimed at opening up a shuttered economy in the face of powerful vested interests. But 1999 will prove the acid test of his capacity to make the really tough decisions.

President Kim faces mounting political challenges. After lying low for most of last year while the Government went about fixing the economy, the Opposition is now exploiting the exasperation of a recession-hit public to stir protest against painful reforms to the powerful conglomerates (known as chaebols) with which it has close ties. In addition, the President's unlikely coalition with the man who headed Korea's spy agency during his dissident days is looking shaky over delays to landmark reforms to the political system.

But the challenges issued by the opposition and the chaebols are becoming President Kim's biggest headaches. They are spoiling for a brawl over the key element of his economic reforms — business swaps and mergers known as "big deals" which have been designed to trim back the sprawling conglomerates.

A year of political blood-letting beckons. The opposition Grand National Party accuses President Kim's National Congress for New Politics of discriminating against chaebols from the GNP's southeastern strongholds. It also challenges strong-arm tactics that it says the Government is using to push the "big deals" through.

"The honeymoon is over," says Jon Gryn Mo, a political science professor at Yonsei University in Seoul. "Basically, for the first six months, President Kim could do whatever he wanted. Now every-
one is showing signs of resistance."

The GNP lost by a whisker at the last election, ending a 50-year monopoly of political power by conservative parties. But it has regrouped and is mounting a fresh challenge to President Kim's coalition Government. Lee Hoi Chang, the GNP leader, has accused President Kim of acting like a dictator and of fanning chronic regional antipathies by discriminating against areas outside his political stronghold in the southwest provinces.



Steering the country out of troubled times: Kim Dae Jung, the South Korean President, is optimistic about his country's future

Honeymoon over for champion of reform

Driving the GNP's resurgence is its fear that it may be reduced to a rump if the NCNP succeeds in eroding its power-base in the southwest provinces, as it must do to win re-election in its own right. Already the NCNP has secured a House majority by poaching two dozen of the opposition's law-makers.

Currently, the proxy war being fought is over the Government's plan to trim back the operations of the chaebols, whose loan binges contributed to the economic crisis. These "big deals" will result in sweeping lay-offs.

The GNP claims that most job losses will hit its power-base of South Kyongsang Province, where most of the top chaebols are based. It has drawn strength from a disgruntled public fearful for their jobs, and is calling on the Govern-

ment to stop force-feeding reforms down the throats of the chaebols.

The GNP's determination to make this year a difficult one for President Kim was exemplified at a protest rally it staged late last month against a planned "big deal" between Samsung and Daewoo. The rally served as a wake-up call for the Government.

"The Government was stunned by the turnout and the people's mood," Professor Jon Gryn Mo says. But it has since picked up the scent of discontent and recently began peace-making moves with the GNP, the fruits of which have not yet ripened.

While fighting a pumped-up opposition, the NCNP also has prob-

A year of political brawling beckons as resistance grows

lems closer to home. Its alliance with the United Liberal Democrats, led by the deeply conservative former spy agency boss Kim Jong Pil, is under strain because of delays in implementing political reforms.

President Kim, a champion of democracy, pledged during his campaign to dilute the virtually unchallenged power of the President by vesting more power in the Prime Minister, who would be responsible to parliament.

Kim Jong Pil, the current Prime Minister, has recently been outspo-

ken about his desire to see his coalition partner make good on the promise. While the NCNP insists that it will act on its pledge, it has been put on the back-burner as the Government tackles the more weighty matter of economic recovery.

"Kim Jong Pil isn't expected to sit idly by if the President ditched that promise," says Professor Lee Jong Hoon, a political scientist.

In an ironic twist, the Opposition's campaign to wreck the NCNP's bid to establish political hegemony may be in Kim Jong Pil's best interests.

Observers say that parliamentary reforms to appease the coalition partner will be pushed down the NCNP priority list if it believes it can win an election without the help of the ULD.

Adventures in joint ventures

INVESTMENT IN UK

Korean outward investment to the UK has slowed. With the economic turmoil forcing the chaebols to restructure, the resultant selling and exchanging of assets has become a preoccupation for them.

Samsung, for example, has sold its automotive sector to Daewoo and the latter has sold its electronics division to Samsung. Meanwhile, Samsung is consolidating its electronics division in the UK and is moving its headquarters from Frankfurt to London.

Hyundai is in the final stages of buying the semiconductor division of LG, including the new semiconductor plant in Wales. It now remains to be seen what Hyundai will do with the operation planned for Newport in South Wales.

Daewoo continues to be a stable source of employment and investment in the UK, with its automotive division showing signs of substantial success.

The emphasis in relation to investments lies at present with those companies seeking venture capital and joint ventures. Venture companies in Korea are defined as advanced technology businesses that achieve growth through continuous research and development which amounts to at least 10 per cent of turnover.

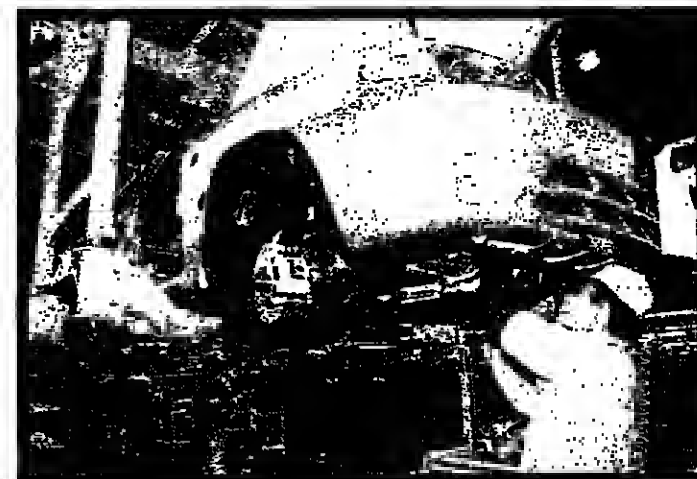
The most important component of the Korean venture industry is

the high level of education of the Korean workforce. The majority of engineers, for example, hold PhDs and most have been educated in the United States. Some Koreans study in the UK, and universities in cities such as Newcastle are attempting to attract greater numbers.

Korean venture companies produce many innovative products but require greater capital investment to commercialise their internationally competitive technologies and products. Some are now linking themselves to the chaebols, which have the global sales markets and the foreign capital required. However, there is a big drive under way to attract foreign investors to the UK.

Last November KOTRA, the Korean trade organisation, brought to the UK representatives of a wide range of venture companies, in areas ranging from electronics to textiles, some of whom were successful in finding joint-venture partners in Britain.

The majority of Korean companies go to the US for their capital, but the UK is now seen as more promising, as the nature of venture capital is becoming more flexible. Successes in such partnerships in the long term can only benefit inward investment into the UK as joint ventures flourish, providing capital returns to British investors and, in the future, new factories and employment.



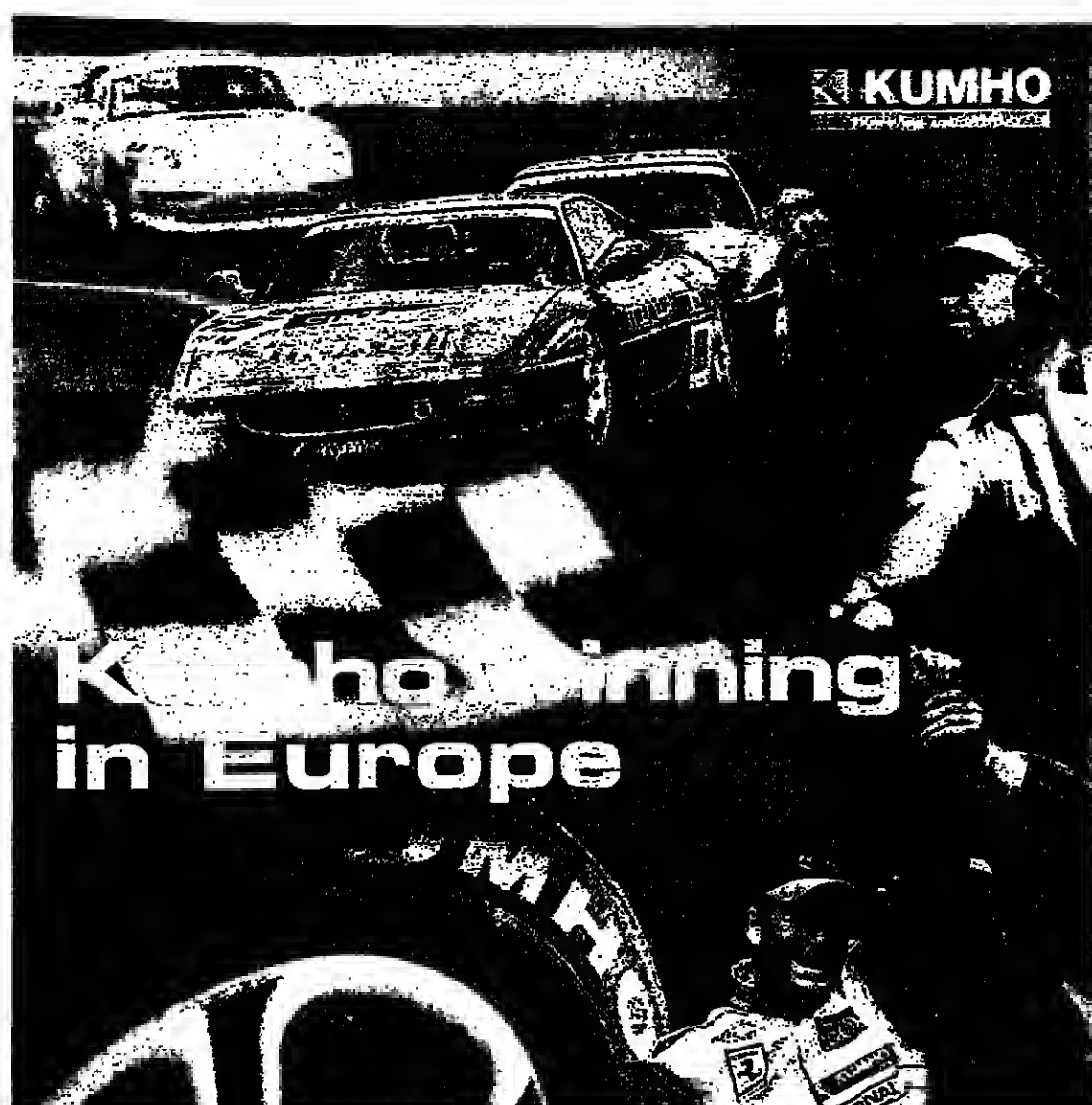
Daewoo's automotive operation in the UK is proving a success



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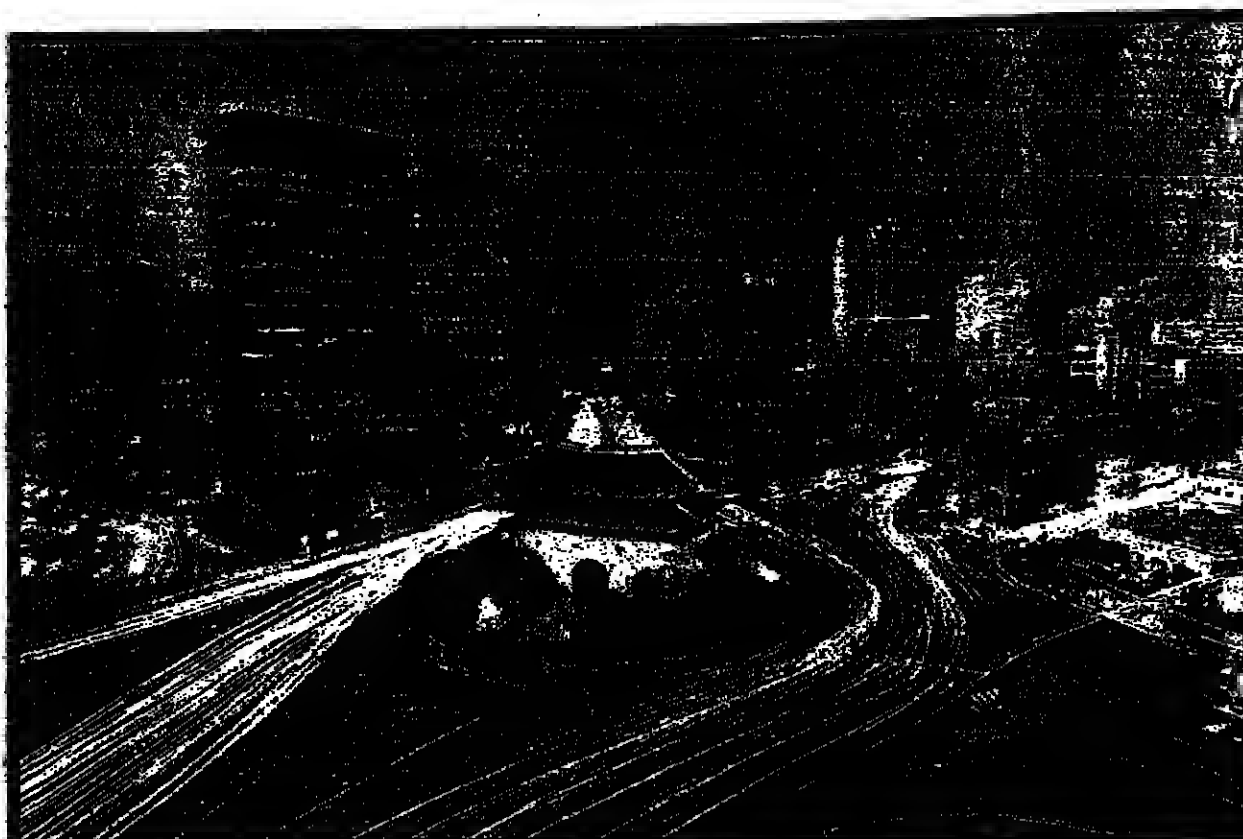
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Get smart and get out of that jam



Korean traffic at night: road improvements and intelligent transport systems are helping to remove congestion

Traffic is heavy in Seoul and other big Korean cities, largely because of an excess of cars and excessive road-building. But a number of bold initiatives are being undertaken to deal with traffic congestion.

This is leading to greater co-operation between the UK and South Korea in the field of intelligent transport systems (ITS).

A two-week mission to Korea by ITS Focus, a British transport research organisation, supported by the DTI, was impressed by the success of one Korean initiative to deal with traffic congestion. This is based on the use of a high-tech e-commerce-based smartcard.

Pusan, the second largest city in South Korea, loses \$1.3 billion each year because of traffic congestion. To combat the problem, the authorities have introduced the Hanaro (buy only one) smartcard system which makes it easier for

Ruth Taplin reports on how co-operation between the UK and South Korea could help to improve road and rail travel

people to use public transport.

The card can be used to pay for bus, minibus travel and the underground rail service in Pusan. An electronic purse model is also available which can pay for taxis and goods in shops. The simpler prepaid card is more popular and allows for fare discounts if used regularly. The take-up has been 76 per cent of the 200 million commuters targeted since the Hanaro system was initiated last August.

The British mission also noted that unlike the UK, the Ko-

rea Highway Corporation (KHC) is helping to develop road traffic conditions that will relieve overall traffic congestion, and it has initiated a new era of expressway building. The intention is that increased road capacity will be built with an integral ITS linked to a network of regional traffic control centres.

Despite the country's economic turmoil these ambitious plans are continuing. The ITS mission believes that UK companies can learn from these plans and members can also

offer supportive services to the Koreans to further the plans.

Co-operation and collaboration between the UK and Korea in the realm of automotive development takes many forms and is invaluable for both sides.

Since Daewoo Motors came to Britain, for example, the AA has been providing purchasers of its vehicles with a three-year free servicing warranty and roadside assistance package. The association also provides a recovery and replacement car service.

So much emphasis has been placed on takeovers and swap deals of major chaebols that the success of other smaller conglomerates which provide necessary components — particularly in the transportation sector — sometimes goes unrecognised.

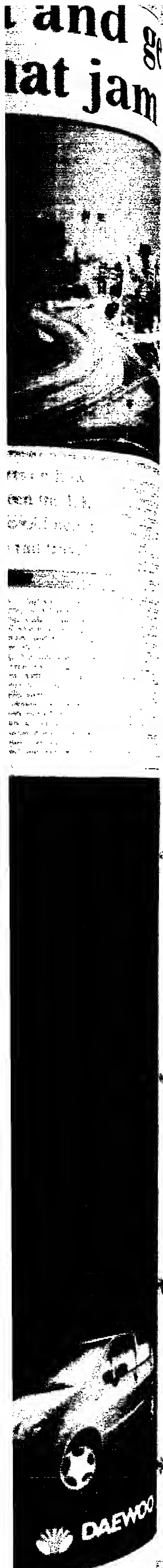
Kumho Tire, for example, through using the latest high-tech equipment, is constantly improving its tyre quality and reputation for safety.

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DAEWOO



RACING: LOSS OF 1,000 GUINEAS FAVOURITE AND DOUBTS ABOUT BIONIC MAR CLASSIC OUTLOOK

Bint Allayl put down after injuring leg

By Chris McGrath

BINT ALLAYL, the champion juvenile filly and favourite for the Sagitta 1,000 Guineas, was put down late on Monday night after a frantic battle to save her after she sustained leg injuries during exercise that morning.

Her death not only deprives the forthcoming Flat season of one of its most luminous young talents, but is also a ghastly blow to Mick Channon, whom she had helped reach new heights in his audience.

Yesterday's meeting at Sedgefield was called off because parts of the course in the back straight still had frost. The future was to have been the first at the track since three horses were killed in an horrific collision there last Tuesday.

cious second career in sport. Though Channon is not the type to be debased by his breakthrough achievements last year, even he must feel shocked by so savage a reminder of his new calling's uncertainties.

He was typically lacking in self-pity yesterday. "You can only be positive in a situation like this," he said. "We were lucky to have her and now we have to move on. Tomorrow morning, we'll go out to work and see if we can find another one. It's tough on me, sure, but it's tough on the staff and the



Bint Allayl wins the Lowther Stakes at York last season on her way to being acclaimed Europe's top juvenile filly

owner, too. Sheikh Ahmed has plenty of horses, but he thought an awful lot of her. The trainer added: "Every one is very disappointed, but it's the business we're in, I'm afraid."

If any of Bionics' anti-post supporters are cynical enough to scoff from the tragedy, however, they will thoroughly deserve the torments in

store during the coming weeks. Henry Cecil, her trainer, confesses that Bionics' foot problems menace her participation in the Guineas. His first priority, however, was to express sympathy for the calamity that claimed her long-time market rival.

The irony is that Channon had only retained the services of Bint Allayl against two more obvious threats. She dodged the draft to Dubai with Godolphin, and also underwent surgery on a hock, which denied her what Channon might justly consider "a penalty kick" for the Cheveley Park Stakes. That left to Warrane Grand, whom she had beaten with customary flair in the Lowther Stakes at York.

Channon still had much his best season, showing great assurance in handling his first yearlings from Sheikh Ahmed al-Maktoum, for whom he won the Gimcrack Stakes with Just a Shadow. Though that colt did go to Dubai, Channon's allocation has been doubled to 10.

Anthony Stroud, the Sheikh's racing manager, said: "While doing a routine canter Bint Allayl suffered a complete spiral fracture of her left fore humerus. She was given emergency first aid on site and transported to Donnington Grove Veterinary Surgery." Here five experts strove in vain to rescue the filly. Stroud added: "Sheikh Ahmed would like to thank them and their staff for their tireless efforts. Mick Channon, who trained her so well, Candy Morris, who rode her, and her dedicated lass Alvena Jones."

The Green Desert filly had shared 5-1 Guineas favourite status with Bionics in the Tote's betting. Bionics now has that dubious honour to herself, at 4-1, followed on 9-1 by Molava and Etizazz. Ladbrokes, better attuned to Cecil's problems, prefers Molava as favourite at 7-1, with Bionics as big as 9-1.

Even that price will make no appeal to anyone reading Cecil's frank update. "She has problems with her feet and it's a question of whether we can train her with them," he said. "It will put itself right eventually, it's a matter of the time we have got. She has been cantering, but not just lately, as she had a corn that had to be cut out. That's not her major problem. She is trotting now and I hope she'll be cantering by the end of the week."

Bionics was restricted to just one appearance at two, impressing in a Goodwood maiden, so she will be sorely lacking experience even if Cecil can get her to the classic.

McCoy escapes lightly from heavy Ludlow fall

By Chris McGrath

TONY MCCOY often appears as indestructible as he can be invincible and the champion jockey was certainly lucky to escape serious injury at Ludlow yesterday.

Leading over the first in the novice handicap chase on Northern Downs, McCoy was thrown to the ground and trampled underfoot by the following field. He lay motionless before being stretched by ambulance to Hereford Hospital for X-rays.

Happily, his vow leaving the course — "I'll take more than this to keep me out of the Cheltenham Festival" — proved no mere bravado, and he was later discharged with nothing more serious than a badly bruised right leg. How his colleague, Andrew Thornton, must envy his good fortune. He makes a welcome return at Folkestone today, after surgery on a leg infection at the end of the year.

The only inflammation at the annual general meeting of the Betting Office Licensees' Association (BOLA) yesterday was verbal. Even here its chairman, Chris Bell, distanced himself from "fizz and froth" over the forthcoming negotiations between racing and betting industries on the next Levy Scheme.

He undertook to keep the "temperature of discussions under control" — and he may have gone some way towards that objective by extending something of an olive twig to the British Horseracing Board (BHB). He told his fellow bookmakers: "I am sympathetic to the challenges of the level of prize-money in racing, and I do want to see targeted improvements."

Though he could see nothing remotely resembling a crisis in racing, he conceded that there is always room for improvement. He was "not complacent". He added: "Nevertheless, at its core the BHB Financial Plan simply does not reveal a state of crisis, except in one clear category — the owners' desire to have a higher level of financial return. On all other issues, in the main, we agree."

He added: "What we can do to ensure that, above all of those shrill voices, we patiently and comprehensively explain our position to those prepared to make reasoned judgments. There are lots of people in positions of responsibility in bookmaking and racing who fit that category."

Peter Savill, the BHB chairman who has matched the early inflexibility of the betting industry's hawks, expressed confidence that he could bring the Levy Board neutrals round to his point of view. "I am by no means certain that I will not shrink from that challenge."

THUNDERER

2.00 Overman
2.30 Stormyweather
3.05 Tyrolan Dream
Timekeeper's top rating: 4.40 YOUTBETTERBELIEVEIT.

GOING: GOOD TO FIRM (GOOD IN PLACES) TOTE JACKPOT MEETING SIS

2.00 TETE-A-TETE SELLING HURDLE (€1,646; 2m 110yds) (15 runners)

101 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
102 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
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114 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
115 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

2.30 MINNOW NOVICES CHASE (€2,599; 3m) (7 runners)

201 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
202 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
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214 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
215 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100

3.05 TOTE HURDLE (€1,646; 2m 110yds) (15 runners)

301 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
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315 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100

3.35 LIBERTY BELLS NOVICES HANDICAP CHASE (€3,253; 2m 3110yds) (16 runners)

401 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
402 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
403 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
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414 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
415 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100

4.05 CANALICULUS JUVENILE NOVICES HURDLE (€4,000; 2m 3110yds) (9 runners)

501 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
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4.40 DOVE INGS HANDICAP CHASE (€2,960; 2m 3110yds) (11 runners)

601 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
602 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
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5.10 JACK SNIPES MAJES OPEN NATIONAL HURDLE FLAT (€1,515; 2m 110yds) (16 runners)

701 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100
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715 000-00 GRATE DEER 56 (F. J. O'Brien) M. A. Fitzgerald 100

THUNDERER

2.20 Summer Flower, 2.50 Hot To Trot, 3.25 First Instance, 3.55 What A Fuss, 4.25 Sunzsch, 5.00 Monks Soham.

GOING: GOOD TO SOFT

2.20 STAMFORD SELLING HURDLE (€1,660; 2m 110yds) (14 runners)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
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13 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
14 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

2.50 LYMPHE NOVICES HURDLE (€2,367; 2m 110yds) (10)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
6 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
7 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
8 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
9 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
10 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

3.25 GAY RECORD CHALLENGE TROPHY (HANDICAP CHASE) (€2,406; 2m) (9)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
6 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
7 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
8 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
9 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

3.55 DAVID BENGE NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE (€2,107; 2m 110yds) (16)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
6 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
7 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
8 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
9 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
10 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
11 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
12 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
13 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
14 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
15 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

4.25 TENTERDEN MAJES HUNTERS CHASE (€1,096; 2m 5f) (11)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
6 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
7 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
8 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
9 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
10 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
11 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

5.00 FOLKESTONE HANDICAP HURDLE (€2,263; 2m 110yds) (16)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
6 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
7 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
8 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
9 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
10 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
11 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
12 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
13 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
14 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
15 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

5.15 WOLVERHAMPTON

THUNDERER

2.10 Gokonda, 2.40 C-Harry, 3.15 China Castle, 3.45 Draive, 4.15 Joseph's Wine, 4.50 High Noon.

GOING: STANDARD DRAW: NO ADVANTAGE SIS

2.10 ROTTWEILER MAJES STAKES (€2,759; 7f) (8 runners)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
6 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
7 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
8 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100

2.40 PARTRIDGE CLAIMING STAKES (€2,097; 7f) (10)

1 000-00 BALLINA BOY 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
2 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
3 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
4 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
5 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
6 000-00 BALLYVAUGHAN 56 (M Brown) J. P. O'Brien 6-11-13 M A Fitzgerald 100
7

FOOTBALL

Rovers forced to dig deep for fresh reserves

By STEPHEN WOOD

IF BLACKBURN Rovers were indeed "running on empty" last weekend, as Brian Kidd, their manager, suggested, there appears to be little hope for them against Newcastle United tonight. The Ewood Park club's resources have been stretched to the limit and the FA Cup fifth-round replay, for the right to meet Everton in the quarter-finals, comes only four days after their worst defeat of the season.

The law of diminishing returns has gripped Blackburn since Kidd took over as manager. He may have indulged himself in the transfer market, to the tune of £15 million, but his options seem to have been reduced with every match. Jason McAteer and Matt Jansen, automatic selections in the FA Cup, are ineligible for the Cup, but their absence is the tip of the iceberg.

Chris Sutton and Stephane Henchoz are also missing



tonight, because of injury. Sutton may not need an operation on the foot problem that has troubled him all season, but it is enough to keep him on the sidelines for a further fortnight in what, he accepts, has become his worst season. His enforced inactivity could also affect his chances of earning an England call-up under Kevin Keegan.

Henchoz may need an operation on knee ligaments that he twisted against Sheffield Wednesday last Saturday. Jeff Kenna, the Ireland full back, is doubtful and Filicori, McKinlay, Johnson and Gallacher are long-term casualties as the club tries to bounce back from the 4-1 drubbing by Wednesday. Kidd was typically stoical

about his injury-ravaged squad yesterday. "There's no point in bellyaching about it," he said. "The players have been hurting while they've been hurting and that's what it's going to be like until the end of the season."

Newcastle's most significant worry concerned Alan Shearer, who was left behind when the squad travelled yesterday because of flu but who Ruud Gullit, the manager, hopes will be able to join his teammates today.

Darren Peacock, the Blackburn defender who used to be a team-mate of Shearer's at Newcastle, expects to be up against the England captain — and knows the key to triumph for a reshuffled defence will be keeping him as quiet as in the first match, which ended 0-0. Peacock dismisses suggestions that Shearer has lost any of his threat. "He is still the same player as far as I'm concerned," Peacock said. "He is powerful and strong and, if you give him a chance, he'll score."

Huddersfield Town, of the Nationwide League first division, are hoping that the reunion of Marcus Stewart and Wayne Allison will improve their chances of knocking out Derby County in another fifth-round replay at Pride Park.

The pair have scored 32 goals this season, and one of those was Stewart's equaliser in the 2-2 draw against Derby at the McAlpine Stadium 11 days ago. Allison was absent from that match because of the death of his father but the player returns tonight.

Derby, who are looking to spend a slice of their transfer budget as soon as possible, welcome back Horacio Carbonari and Francesco Baiano after a rest. Paolo Wanchope, the striker, could be recalled at the expense of Deon Burton, while Jacob Laursen is suspended.

A substandard performance saw Derby lose 2-0 at home to Charlton Athletic in the Premiership last weekend and Jim Smith, the manager, said: "We can't afford a repeat of that against Huddersfield."



Choi and Kim pose for photographs at Kimpo airport in Seoul before flying to London to link up with West Ham

West Ham disown Koreans

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

WEST HAM United yesterday insisted that rumours that they were to sign two South Korea internationals in a multimillion-pound deal were grossly exaggerated. The FA Carling Premiership club said that they were simply doing them a favour by allowing the two players to train with them.

West Ham were reported to have paid an Asian record transfer fee of £3 million for Choi Yong-soo, South Korea's top striker, and a further £1 million for Kim Doh-keun, a midfielder.

But Peter Storie, the chief executive at Upton Park, said: "This is absolute nonsense. Harry Redknapp was approached by the players' representative and asked if he would allow the two players to train with the club while they were on a visit to London. Harry said yes and is simply doing them a favour — we have no interest in signing these players whatsoever. The players are paying their own

expenses while they are over here."

The confusion arose after reports from Southeast Asia claimed that a deal had been completed. A spokesman for Choi's club, LG Cheetahs, who opted that Perugia, the Italian club, had paid £2 million for Hidekoshi Nakata, of Japan, said: "Choi's transfer money is the biggest in history for an Asian player."

To add weight to the story, Choi had reportedly told journalists: "I'm very pleased. This is a dream come true. I always wanted to play in Europe. I'm all the more pleased because I am going to Great Britain, homeland of football. I'll do my best, keeping in mind that South Korea is going to co-host the 2002 World Cup."

Choi, 6ft tall and nicknamed The Eagle because of his speed and ability to read the game, was a key member of the South Korea squad at

the World Cup finals in France last year. He scored seven goals in seven appearances in the Asian qualifying matches for France 98.

Meanwhile, Les Scheinflug, the Australia youth soccer coach, demanded yesterday that the England Under-16 side's 2-1 victory over Cyprus in a European championship qualifying match be overturned because they fielded an Australian player.

Thorne wants Fifa to develop a compensation package to protect Australian federations that invest heavily in players, only to see them opt to represent other countries. Some Australian coaches and administrators contend that Leeds United, annoyed at losing Harry Keewell to Australia last year, have entered an agreement with Westfields High School, where McMaster studied. They claim that under the deal the Sydney school directs to Leeds young players who are able to qualify for England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Australia. What right have they to play him?"

Peter Thorne, the general manager of the New South Wales Soccer Federation (NSWSF), said that McMaster had been given a provisional clearance by the Football Association through Fifa, the world governing body. However, Thorne stressed that the NSWSF had refused to clear him to play for England.

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FOOTBALL IN BRIEF

Full house to cheer Keegan's first game

ENGLAND'S first game under Kevin Keegan is a sell-out. Tickets to see the European championship qualifying match against Poland at Wembley on March 27 were snapped up within 36 hours of going on sale. A capacity 75,000 will be packed into the national stadium, although the game was sold out before Keegan's appointment.

Martin Corrie, a Wembley spokesman, said that the demand for tickets had rivalled that for England's World Cup qualifying match against Italy two years ago but that new high-tech box-office facilities had enabled tickets to be sold more quickly.

Gareth Barry, the Aston Villa central defender, will celebrate his 18th birthday today by signing a five-year contract with the club. Barry agreed the deal, which will keep him at Villa Park until the summer of 2004, in December, but will today formally put pen to paper.

Alun Armstrong, the Middlesbrough striker, has had to delay his long-awaited comeback after injuring a hamstring in training. Armstrong has not played since sustaining a pre-season Achilles tendon injury and will now be out of action for another month.

Wales are considering an appeal against Uefa's decision not to allow them to switch the European championship qualifying match against Denmark on June 9 from Anfield to Ninian Park.

Colin Addison has been appointed manager of Scarborough, who are bottom of the Nationwide League third division. Addison, 58, has been given a contract until the end of next season.

Gabriel Amato, signed by Rangers from Real Mallorca last summer, could be on his way back to Spain. Atletico Madrid, who need cover for the injured strikers, Kiko and Fernando Correa, are considering a bid.

Andy Gray, the Nottingham Forest winger, has joined Preston North End on a month's loan, with a view to a permanent move.

SAILING

Cup funds hampering Britain

IT IS now beginning to look certain that Great Britain will be represented in the 2000 America's Cup, which begins in Auckland later this year (Edward Gorman writes). However, a continuing shortage of funds in the Spirit of Britain syndicate leaves in question the scale and quality of the challenge.

After a long and difficult search for significant commercial sponsorship backing, Professor Andrew Graves, the chairman of the Spirit of Britain, has decided to go ahead with building one boat while he continues to hunt down the necessary funds to ensure that it is properly campaigned when it reaches Auckland.

It is thought that a group of private backers together with commercial suppliers is enabling one 82ft boat to be built at Portland, Dorset, with a budget of around £15 million. Michael Humphreys, a spokesman for the syndicate that is led on the water by Lawrence Smith, said yesterday that Britain will definitely take part. "We have enough money to make a challenge, but we need more to challenge effectively," he said. This will be Britain's first appearance in an America's Cup for 12 years.

CRICKET: BOARD KEEPS ITS OPTIONS OPEN BY REINSTATING CAPTAIN FOR TWO MORE TESTS

By IVO TENNANT

Lara gets chance to make amends

IN APPOINTING Brian Lara captain for the first two Tests of West Indies' forthcoming series against Australia, the Board is giving him a chance to redeem himself after the shambolic tour of South Africa. The decision, reached after a two-day meeting in Antigua, would also have something to do with a lack of suitable alternatives.

It might, too, have been made for reasons of political expediency. The first Test of the four-match series, starting on March 5, is to be played at Port of Spain, Trinidad. Lara's home ground. The insularity that Sir Frank Worrell strove to overcome in the 1960s is apparent once more in the Caribbean: the appointment of a Jamaican or a Bajan may have led to strife on and off the pitch.

A year ago, Lara was leading West Indies to victory over England in his first series as their official captain. Since then, his form has deteriorated, as, indeed, has his reputation as a captain. His tenure in charge of Warwickshire was not a success and there was little evident unity during the tour of South Africa, which West Indies lost 5-0. The players' revolt, which he initiated before it began, did not reflect well on him.

Assuming his eyesight has not deteriorated, as has been suggested, Lara's own form should return. As to his

captaincy, he would be well advised to take more heed of the experience of Clive Lloyd, a marginalised figure as his tour manager in South Africa. He will, no doubt, spend some time on the golf course with the West Indian he respects above all others, Sir Garfield Sobers, who also had to cope with leading a side dependent on his own ability.

In England in 1969, when

several exceptional players had retired or were past their best, he too, struggled with the bat.

Owing to the geography of the West Indies, the captaincy has long been a tangled issue. Each island is a separate territory with its own government and culture. When Lara replaced Courtney Walsh, a Jamaican, as captain for the series against England last year,

there were fears that demonstrations would take place during the first Test in Kingston. So the West Indies Board, under the presidency of Pat Rousseau, is giving Lara every chance of succeeding before his own kin in Trinidad. Fail there and in the cockpit of Sabina Park, the venue for the second Test, and there will be no shortage of vociferous cricket followers ready to tell him that Walsh or Jimmy Adams, another Jamaican, should have had the job instead.

As for inter-island rivalry, which is afflicting West Indies' unity once more, Lara will doubtless be reminded by Sobers of Worrell's attempts in his day to create "a comity of nations". West Indies' greatest captain went in 1966 that "the team has proved it is a working federal unit and the chambers of commerce, politicians and, indeed, all thinking West Indians see the necessity for regional co-operation."

West Indies were given a reminder of the tasks that lay ahead of them on the field in the weeks ahead yesterday when Australia bowled out the West Indies Board XI for 55 in Antigua. Adam Dale, the seam bowler, took seven for 24 as Australia established a first-innings lead of 101.

Bulbeck's accuracy is the deciding factor

FROM JOHN STERN IN CHRISTCHURCH

CHRISTCHURCH (England Under-19 won toss) Canterbury Emerging Players by 110 runs

DESPITE falling at least 30 runs short of their desired total batting first, England Under-19 completed a comfortable and useful victory over Canterbury Emerging Players in their only one-day practice match before the limited overs series against New Zealand Under-19, which begins on Thursday.

Michael Gough, the captain, and Ian Flanagan, who made 93 for the second time on this tour, put on 158

for the first wicket in 28 overs, a partnership that ought to have been the foundation for a total in the region of 300. England managed only 260 for six, which, as it turned out, was more than enough. Having started well and progressed to 106 for three in the 23rd over, Canterbury capitulated to 150 all out. Matt Bulbeck, the Somerset left-arm, took the vital wicket having Marcel McKenzie caught in the deep by Marc Symington for 50.

Bulbeck, coming on as second change, took two for nine in an exceptionally accurate spell of seven overs.

England A ready for hard finale

FROM THRASY PETROPOULOS IN JOHANNESBURG

THE ENGLAND A team have arrived in South Africa for the final leg of their winter tour. After the success of Zimbabwe, where both the international and limited-overs series were won convincingly, they are certain to come up against a higher standard of opposition. They will play two matches, the first against a province, Gauteng, at the Wanderers, beginning tomorrow, and then a five-day match against the President's XI.

When this tour was originally conceived the intention had been to stage a fuller itinerary in South Africa with an additional, shorter visit to Zimbabwe. With West Indies involved in a five-test series against South Africa, the United Cricket Board (UCB) were, however, unable to host a full A tour. Consequently, this visit is being funded completely by the England and Wales Cricket Board.

Finances apart, the logistic difficulties the UCB encountered became apparent yesterday when confusion emerged over the venue for the match against the President's XI. Originally scheduled to be played in Cape Town, the recent success of Western Province has seen them reach second place in the domestic first-class league here and, depending on the outcome of their next match, they may claim home advantage in the final. In that instance, a new venue for the game — most likely Port Elizabeth — will have to be found.

Of more immediate concern will be the four-day encounter against Gauteng, who have rested Ken Rutherford, their captain, and former New Zealand skipper, and are likely to give opportunities to several coloured players in line with the UCB's initiative to increase the racial mix of the sport here.

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL

INTERNATIONAL MATCHES: Switzerland 69, England 65 (in Nyon). NATIONAL ASSOCIATION (FIBA): Atlanta 88, Chicago 77, Cleveland 87, Philadelphia 102, Orlando 107, Sacramento 88, Denver 117, Los Angeles Lakers 113 (OT), Minnesota 81, San Antonio 88, Phoenix 101, Dallas 88, Utah 104, Los Angeles Clippers 98.

CAMBRIDGE LENT RACES

MEET: Second division: Peterhouse 1st, Sidney Sussex 2nd, St Catharine's 3rd, 1st and 2nd Trinity 4th, 3rd Trinity 5th, 4th Trinity 6th, 5th Trinity 7th, 6th Trinity 8th, 7th Trinity 9th, 8th Trinity 10th, 9th Trinity 11th, 10th Trinity 12th, 11th Trinity 13th, 12th Trinity 14th, 13th Trinity 15th, 14th Trinity 16th, 15th Trinity 17th, 16th Trinity 18th, 17th Trinity 19th, 18th Trinity 20th, 19th Trinity 21st, 20th Trinity 22nd, 21st Trinity 23rd, 22nd Trinity 24th, 23rd Trinity 25th, 24th Trinity 26th, 25th Trinity 27th, 26th Trinity 28th, 27th Trinity 29th, 28th Trinity 30th, 29th Trinity 31st, 30th Trinity 32nd, 31st Trinity 33rd, 32nd Trinity 34th, 33rd Trinity 35th, 34th Trinity 36th, 35th Trinity 37th, 36th Trinity 38th, 37th Trinity 39th, 38th Trinity 40th, 39th Trinity 41st, 40th Trinity 42nd, 41st Trinity 43rd, 42nd Trinity 44th, 43rd Trinity 45th, 44th Trinity 46th, 45th Trinity 47th, 46th Trinity 48th, 47th Trinity 49th, 48th Trinity 50th, 49th Trinity 51st, 50th Trinity 52nd, 51st Trinity 53rd, 52nd Trinity 54th, 53rd Trinity 55th, 54th Trinity 56th, 55th Trinity 57th, 56th Trinity 58th, 57th Trinity 59th, 58th Trinity 60th, 59th Trinity 61st, 60th Trinity 62nd, 61st Trinity 63rd, 62nd Trinity 64th, 63rd Trinity 65th, 64th Trinity 66th, 65th Trinity 67th, 66th Trinity 68th, 67th Trinity 69th, 68th Trinity 70th, 69th Trinity 71st, 70th Trinity 72nd, 71st Trinity 73rd, 72nd Trinity 74th, 73rd Trinity 75th, 74th Trinity 76th, 75th Trinity 77th, 76th Trinity 78th, 77th Trinity 79th, 78th Trinity 80th, 79th Trinity 81st, 80th Trinity 82nd, 81st Trinity 83rd, 82nd Trinity 84th, 83rd Trinity 85th, 84th Trinity 86th, 85th Trinity 87th, 86th Trinity 88th, 87th Trinity 89th, 88th Trinity 90th, 89th Trinity 91st, 90th Trinity 92nd, 91st Trinity 93rd, 92nd Trinity 94th, 93rd Trinity 95th, 94th Trinity 96th, 95th Trinity 97th, 96th Trinity 98th, 97th Trinity 99th, 98th Trinity 100th, 99th Trinity 101st, 100th Trinity 102nd, 101st Trinity 103rd, 102nd Trinity 104th, 103rd Trinity 105th, 104th Trinity 106th, 105th Trinity 107th, 106th Trinity 108th, 107th Trinity 109th, 108th Trinity 110th, 109th Trinity 111th, 110th Trinity 112th, 111th Trinity 113th, 112th Trinity 114th, 113th Trinity 115th, 114th Trinity 116th, 115th Trinity 117th, 116th Trinity 118th, 117th Trinity 119th, 118th Trinity 120th, 119th Trinity 121st, 120th Trinity 122nd, 121st Trinity 123rd, 122nd Trinity 124th, 123rd Trinity 125th, 124th Trinity 126th, 125th Trinity 127th, 126th Trinity 128th, 127th Trinity 129th, 128th Trinity 130th, 129th Trinity 131st, 130th Trinity 132nd, 131st Trinity 133rd, 132nd Trinity 134th, 133rd Trinity 135th, 134th Trinity 136th, 135th Trinity 137th, 136th Trinity 138th, 137th Trinity 139th, 138th Trinity 140th, 139th Trinity 141st, 140th Trinity 142nd, 141st Trinity 143rd, 142nd Trinity 144th, 143rd Trinity 145th, 144th Trinity 146th, 145th Trinity 147th, 146th Trinity 148th, 147th Trinity 149th, 148th Trinity 150th, 149th Trinity 151st, 150th 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ATHLETICS

Ladejo set to take the money and run

By DAVID POWELL
ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT

THERE will be some prize-money, though not much, at stake today when Duane Ladejo runs his first 400 metres for Great Britain since the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. How Ladejo, the European indoor and outdoor champion who gave up both titles for life as a decathlete, wishes it was more.

Five years ago, Ladejo denied Roger Black a third successive European outdoor gold medal and, 18 months later, won a second successive continental indoor title. No longer, though, does he enjoy the annual £100,000-plus a year in endorsements, or the five-figure appearance fees.

Still striving for his breakthrough as a decathlete, Ladejo has no sponsor and draws nothing from lottery funding. He has debts but he is happy. "I am not claiming poverty," Ladejo said yesterday. "This is my choice and I love it. The decathlon has revived me."

In two years as a decathlete, Ladejo has made sound if unspectacular progress. He finished as the top Briton at the Commonwealth Games, in seventh, but is still more than 300 points short of 8,000, the benchmark of world class.

"Hopefully this year I will be able to put out some world-class performances in the decathlon," Ladejo said. So determined is he that, when he travels to Maastricht, Japan, for the 400 metres at the world indoor championships next week, he will maintain his training in other events.

Why, then, is Ladejo back running 400s, albeit temporarily? "I need the money," he said. "I would not be going to the world championships if there was no prize-money and no way would I be doing 400s. My focus is not so much on winning as on the £50,000."

Victory in the six-nations international in Genoa today would earn Ladejo just \$1,000 but it all helps and he needs the race to sharpen for Maastricht. Even if he fails to finish in the prize-money in the individual race in Japan, the strength of the Britain relay team almost guarantees a deposit into his bank account.

TENNIS: CZECH DENOUNCES RUDESKI FOR COMMENTS ON HIS POSITIVE STEROID TEST

Drug issue continues to hound Korda

By JULIAN MUSCAT, TENNIS CORRESPONDENT

A DIFFERENT sort of welcome awaited Petr Korda when he played at the Guardian Direct Cup 12 months ago. The Czech player arrived in London fresh from winning the Australian Open, his first grand-slam title, and hot on the trail of Pete Sampras's place at the top of the game.

Now Korda languishes at No 75 in the world rankings. The positive drugs test he submitted at Wimbledon seven months ago has besmirched his reputation. He is deep into the twilight of his career and his game is in tatters.

After escaping a ban when traces of nandrolone, an anabolic steroid, was found in his urine, Korda, 31, spoke of postponing his retirement to clear his name and finish with a flourish. There is no hint, no suggestion at all that he might recapture his former glories. He remains a slightly isolated figure, his furrowed features telling of a man on whose shoulders the doping problem has rested heavily. It has certainly hijacked his form post-Wimbledon—as evidenced by a string of first-round losses.

Given the cloud surrounding his participation, it is probably as well that he never did overhaul Sampras, a leader by example, both on and off the court. His silence on the issue would have been that much harder to bear.

As it is, the tennis community waits while the legal process runs its course. Perhaps Korda will then furnish the doubters with his account of how he came to test positive after his quarter-final defeat by Tim Henman.

However, it emerged yesterday that they may have to wait a little longer. Korda intimated that he might not be willing to speak at all. He escaped a mandatory one-year ban when, under the terms of the anti-doping programme, he

stated that he did not knowingly take the offending steroid. He has since rebutted all efforts to elicit a satisfactory explanation on the legal pretext that the International Tennis Federation continues to appeal against the ruling.

A final verdict on the appeal process is expected by the end of next month. But yesterday, after beating Wayne Ferreira, 6-3, 6-4 at Battersea, Korda said: "I don't know if I will ever talk about it. It is not in my hands. I know what happened and it is not an easy situation. Once I quit, maybe a few months after that, I could make some comments."

He also denounced players, including Greg Rusedski, who used the media to express their views on his predicament. "Any player can challenge me face to face instead of laughing behind me," he said. "I am following the rules and no one has the right to clean my house out. Greg doesn't know the rules or about my case," he continued, "but I am not going to be offensive to anyone."

Korda's words added spice to his possible second-round encounter with Rusedski, who opened his campaign last night against Gianluca Pozzi of Italy. More relaxed in his mind was Thomas Johansson, who registered a victory over Petr Luxa, a qualifier from the Czech Republic, 6-2, 6-4.

Johansson, seeded No 8, will remember his win over an opponent ranked No 212 for one reason. It was the Swede's first of the year after first-round exits in Doha, Sydney and Melbourne. Still, it is not a bad life. Johansson earned \$21,000 (around £13,000) for losing those matches.

Yevgeny Kafelnikov, for one, will have welcomed Johansson's reviving fortunes. He must beat the Swede in their projected quarter-final on Friday, thereby earning



Korda serves during his win over Wayne Ferreira in Battersea Park, London, yesterday

valuable bonus ranking points, to wrest the No 1 spot from Sampras. Anything less and the Russian will be obliged to progress to the final.

Cedric Pioline, the beaten finalist last year, collapsed at the first hurdle this time against the enigmatic Nicolas Pietrangeli, of Germany. In succumbing over three sets in the quarter-finals in Rotterdam last week, Pioline lost both the tie-breaks he played against Rusedski. A similar fate befell him here as Kiefer rallied to

oust the Frenchman 5-7, 6-2, 7-5 after just over 2½ hours.

Henman, who opens tomorrow against a Slovakian in Jan Krosak, learnt yesterday that victory would pinch him against another in Dominik Hrbaty, who bettered Stefano Pescosolido. Hrbaty prevailed 6-3, 6-7, 6-2 in another lengthy encounter.

A sombre mood governed events yesterday after the death of Menno Oosting, of Holland. The player was killed in a car crash when

returning home from a challenge event in France on Monday night. Several players observed a minute's silence on the court. Among them were two of his compatriots: Paul Haarhuis, who spoke eloquently of Oosting, and Rickard Krajcek, who was moved to tears.

LINKS

WEBSITE: www.sport.com
TELEVISION: BBC2, 2.10 (highlights)

Brotherhood of beauty and the beast

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

What do you have to do to get sent off in a rugby union match? We debated this question after the England v Scotland match with precisely that degree of seriousness that we feel is expected of sportswriters of our calibre. How about if you mowed down the entire opposition pack with an Uzi?

Nah. You'd get a pretty serious talking-to, mind you. A real finger-wagging. You! No 4, whilst you know perfectly well you're not supposed to use that gun on full automatic. Next time, keep it to single shots. All right? Or I might have to give you a yellow card.

Actually, I have changed my mind about Martin Johnson. I said on Monday that he was a Cro-Magnon: further research makes it clear he is a dead ringer for the Homo erectus skull found east of Lake Turkana in 1975. The extraordinary development of the brow-ridge makes diagnosis certain.

Johnson is, I read, a big man in many ways. Mainly, it must be said, in terms of size. In demeanour he reminds me of Spiny Norman, the giant hedgehog in Monty Python who stalked the streets of London as the nemesis of Dinsdale Piranha. You can just see Johnson walking heavily-footed across the Twickenham turf, bawling out the terrible words: "Dinsdale! Dinsdale!"

Dinsdale Piranha's main form of retribution was nailing people's heads to the floor. "I wanted him to do it, because I'd transgressed the unwritten law."

The Times on Monday had a nice picture of Johnson nailing John Leslie's head to the floor. He used his left boot to do so—I do love a forward who is genuinely two-footed, don't you? All his weight was in the air and down he came. Look out, larynx.

Now stamping on a chap's larynx can be as lethal as snapping off half a magazine from an Uzi. And the referee was so shocked and appalled that he felt that a mere talking-to was not enough. And so he took extreme measures: a yellow card!

And this means that Johnson can't actually be punished further. This seems illogical, considering that a yellow card is not so much a punishment as a warning, but there you go. A yellow card closes the matter.

Just as Johnson stalks the field in the guise of Homo erectus, so beings of the more recent past stalk through every corner of rugby union. The rolling spiral, as ever, what's-it-got-to-do-with-you? Boys will be boys, let's all kick the crap out of each other and it's all right

because we generally have 23 pins each afterwards and that's the great brotherhood of rugby union, right boys? Rugby union is in love with what is hidden, secret, set apart. Rugby union never closes ranks, because its ranks have never for a second opened. It is the very nature of the sport: the forwards line up as one man and blows and biffs are given and returned in the many-legged heart of things.

And ear-biting and stamping and punching and gouging go on because the structure of the game makes such things inevitable. Very large strong men are rolling over and over on the floor for the possession of one small thing and nobody can see what's going on.

Ruck laws change and change again but the nature of a ruck makes laws almost impossible to write, and even if perfectly written, possible to impose, with even-handedness, still less accuracy.

Professionalism has not created this climate of secret violence: it has merely added one more plint of bat's blood to the cauldron.

In football you get a yellow card for looking cross and you get sent off for sneezing. The game has swung the other way. Perhaps all games performed in public in front of paying spectators must do so.

But rugby remains in thrall to the notion of secrecy and the ruck is at the heart of it all, for that matter at the very heart of rugby. And, even if the will to police the ruck exists, I doubt very much if policing it is a practical prospect. Rugby can't live with the ruck, can't live without it. There will be many more of these cases of stamping, stud-raking, punching and ear-biting.

It is simply a very violent game. That is its beauty, and its curse. Even if a genuine will to control the illegal part of that violence existed—and it does not—then rugby's officials would be forever running up the down escalator... with Spiny Norman rushing down to meet them, teeth bared. Dinsdale!

SPORT IN BRIEF

■ **CRICKET:** The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) emphasised yesterday its intention that the World Cup in England this summer should be a carnival, family affair with no bans on fancy dress or musical instruments inside grounds. It hopes to attract more women to the competition. The ECB announced that Outspan, the citrus fruit company, will be an official supplier to the World Cup and that it will undertake research on women's views about cricket. A free, magazine called *Bodyline* will help them understand the finer points.

■ **ATHLETICS:** Richard Nerurkar has been forced to withdraw from the 1999 Flora London Marathon on medical advice. Nerurkar, of Britain, fifth in the 1997 event, said: "I've struggled to find my best form in training and competition and following a series of medical tests I've had over the past three weeks. I have been advised to take an extended period of quiet training."

■ **HOCKEY:** Mike Corby, who has made 59 appearances for England and 33 for Great Britain, has been nominated by the Middlesex County Hockey Association to stand for the position of vice-president of the English Hockey Association at the forthcoming annual general meeting. He is at present vice-president of the English Squash Rackets Association and the world federation.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Video referee's debut delayed

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

A VIDEO referee will make a first appearance at Wembley for the Silk Cut Challenge Cup final on May 1. Rulings on close try-scoring decisions referred by the referee will be made from television pictures and relayed by red and green lights visible to the crowd, as in cricket.

The system was to have been used in the televised fifth-round matches between Leeds Rhinos and St Helens last Saturday and Warrington Wolves and Halifax Blue Sox last Sunday. However, because of technical problems, its debut has been delayed until the quarter-finals next month.

The light-board has been a feature of the Australian game for a couple of seasons, while the video screen, as pioneered in coverage of live Super League matches on BSkyB in 1996, has become an accepted, if expensive, means of judging contentious scoring decisions.

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is anxious to learn more about reports from Australia that have cast doubt on the tri-nations series between Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand in October and November.

Problems with forward planning and the shelving of a

World Cup in Australia last year looked to have been resolved with a series of international initiatives put in place, including the rescheduling of the World Cup for 2000 in Britain, by the new Rugby League International Federation (RLIF).

However, Gerald Ryan, the New Zealand Rugby League chairman, has reportedly threatened to withdraw New Zealand unless Australia table a business plan for the tri-nations, while David Barnhill, the Australian Rugby League general manager, has been quoted as saying that a decision whether to proceed with the annual series against the Kiwis or admit Britain had not yet been made.

The RFL is seeking assurances before the RLIF meeting in Sydney next month, otherwise the game's international reputation will be dealt another damaging blow. The World Nines, due to have been held in Johannesburg last month, were cancelled by the South African Rugby League because of a lack of television guarantees, which has put a question mark against a proposed game there between Britain and New Zealand in November.

SPORTS POLITICS: GOVERNMENT TO ANNOUNCE NEW NETWORK FOR TRAINING

Regional centres to groom our talent

By JOHN GOODBODY

JOHN MAJOR'S vision of Britain having a £160 million Academy of Sport to groom stars is finally over. The Government will announce on Monday that there will be a network of ten regional centres in England, with Sheffield, once picked as its hub, now downgraded to becoming just one of these facilities for training.

Instead of being the glittering centre for reviving Britain's sporting prestige, only a handful of sports will be using the proposed site in

the Lower Don Valley. However, Sheffield will still house the centre for sports science, medicine and research. The original plan, announced four years ago by the former Prime Minister, included an academy, offering residential places for 500 young people, who would improve their sporting ability while pursuing academic subjects.

The scheme will please most national governing bodies, which originally

opposed Major's plans for a UK Sports Institute (UKSI) but had to wait until after the change of government in 1997 to be heard. David Sparkes, the chief executive of the Amateur Swimming Association, said yesterday: "We have got what sport wanted—a series of network regional sites. But we have wasted at least two years in getting there."

Some sports, such as football and cricket, want their own specialist national

centres, and did not want to be part of an all-embracing central academy.

The network of ten regional facilities, including Bath and Loughborough, will accommodate many outstanding competitors closer to their homes. The £160 million of National Lottery money, originally earmarked for the UKSI, will still be used for the capital projects, but only £40 million will be given to Sheffield, split between its regional facilities and the sports medicine and research centre.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

Luckily, as in golf, there are no pictures on the score-card at bridge. My antics on this hand from the 1998 Gold Cup final went unnoticed by the rest of the team when we only lost 1 IMP on the board.

Dealer East	N-S game	IMPs
<p> ♠ A 8 5 ♥ 10 7 6 4 2 ♦ Q J ♣ — </p>	<p> ♠ K Q 10 3 ♥ A 8 7 3 ♦ K 6 5 ♣ — </p>	<p> ♠ J 7 2 ♥ K J 5 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ 9 7 3 2 </p>

Contract: Four Hearts by South. Lead: ten of diamonds.

After East passed I opened One Heart, and my partner Howard Cohen put me into Four Hearts. After the diamond lead my chances were poor, though as it happens, I have no club loser if I guess that suit correctly. Also the spade situation is exceptionally favourable. If I lead twice towards the king-queen, West gives me three tricks in the suit if he rises with the ace, and if he ducks twice my spade loser disappears.

To cater for this spade holding I won East's queen of diamonds and played a spade. West (Terry Goldsmith) went in with the ace straight away. Had he continued diamonds there would have been no story, but he switched to the queen of clubs.

I won in hand, cashed the ace of hearts and took two spade tricks, discarding my diamond loser. When East (Gerald Soper) followed with the jack of spades on the

third round it seemed safe enough to play a fourth spade. I presumed he would ruff from either king-jack or jack alone, so effectively it was like playing a trump.

However, Soper discarded. Now I placed West with both outstanding trumps, and so ruffed dummy's remaining diamond and exited with a heart from hand. I hoped West would have to win and play a club away from his jack.

Unfortunately it was East who had the two trump tricks, and after he had cashed them and correctly played a club, there was a nervous moment when I put in the eight. But the jack appeared, and when we scored up I was able to reply casually "one away" when my team-mates announced "minus 650".

Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Joint lead

After two rounds of the elite tournament in Linares, Spain, two players share the lead: Garry Kasparov, the world champion, who scored a rare win as Black against Ivanchuk, and Michael Adams, of Great Britain.

White: Vassily Ivanchuk
Black: Garry Kasparov
Linares 1999

Sicilian Defence	White	Black
1 e4 c5	2 Nf3	2 d4
3 d4 cxd4	4 Nxd4	4 Nf5
5 Nc3	6 Bg2	6 Ng4
7 Bg5	8 Bf4	8 Bg7
9 Bg3	10 Qd2	10 Nc6
11 Ne3	12 Qf2	12 Rb8
13 Bf2	14 Nd4	14 b4
15 Nd1	16 Bxd4	16 d5
17 ead5	18 c3	18 Qe5
19 Bc2	20 Qe3	20 Qb7
21 Nf2	22 Bc3	22 Qe6
23 Kf1	24 b3	24 Rb8
25 Rd1	26 Qc3	26 Ng4
27 Qe5	28 Kf1	28 Rb8
29 Qe6	30 Qe6	30 Bc6
31 Bc1		

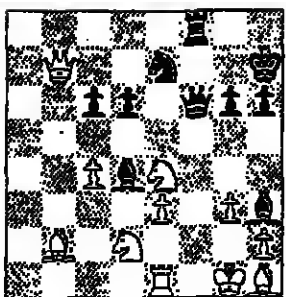
White: Veselin Topalov
Black: Michael Adams
Linares 1999

Ruy Lopez	White	Black
1 e4 e5	2 Nf3	2 Nc6
3 Bb5	4 Bb4	4 a6
		4 Nf6

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

Black to play. This position is from the game Mayer—Nakamura, Washington 1998. How did Black make the most of his powerful pair of bishops?



Solution on page 46

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

HEDERIGERENT

- a. A female regent
b. Cantankerous
c. Wearing ivy

JALAP

- a. A Japanese/Laplander
b. A thick enamel
c. A purgative

HYGROMA

- a. A tumour
b. A sea monster
c. A seaweed

HARMATTAN

- a. A wind
b. A New York district
c. A Muslim feast

Answers on page 46

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every now and then an editor turns up who thinks, why not pay a little more and hire the real thing? Her shamelessness, fearlessness, honesty, and her pathological need to shock, along with her unshakeable self-belief, could produce an unpalatable cocktail, but her skill is that she has made them work: often dazzlingly.

Workers At War (BBC) showed what happens when the staff want more serious revenge than verbal feuding. Toby Young took his revenge against Burchill by closing down her magazine. To feature in last night's *Workers At War* he'd have had to burn down her house, too. Here were people — angry at being sacked, or not hired, or unpaid — who didn't know where to draw the line when they got mad. It's usually best to forgive and forget. But it's true that it's much easier to forgive once you've not even.

CHANNEL

6.00m 5 News and Sport With Becky Anderson (5170788)
 7.00 World/World Pan four. Teaching children to read (P) (5549327)
 7.30 Milkshake! (6842811)
 7.35 Wizzle's House (P) (5 News Update) (3790453)
 8.00 HavaKazoo (P) (4573827)
 8.30 Dappledown Farm (P) (5 News Update) (4572238)
 9.00 Hot Property (P) (1285434)
 9.30 Russell Gray's Postcards (7990705)
 9.55 The Gyle - Womanshow (P) (6643898)
 10.20 Sunset Beach Am Show to return the emerald (P) (1643182)
 11.10 Lezza (4527065)
 12.00pm 5 News at Noon (P) (4543788)
 12.30 Family Affairs: Yvonne agrees to come home (P) (5 News Update) (5588960)
 1.00 The Bold and the Beautiful: Grant confides in Katie (P) (5544298)
 1.30 The Roseanne Show: Melanie Griffin visits time off from her new TV series and working on Woody Allen's film Celebrity to talk to Roseanne (P) (5987231)
 2.00 100 Per Cent Gold (5733960)

2.30 Good Afternoon Daily entertainment, and
News Update (1386540)

3.30 Menu for Murder (TVM 1980)
Who shot the man whose strange com-
munications surrounding the death of a
unpopular school PTSA president, Morgan
Fairchild and Julia Duffy star. Directed by
Larry Perry (9370526)

5.25 Sesame Street series (1)
News Update (1569863)

9.00 100 Per Cent Out (6990705)

6.30 Family Affairs Pete is apparently furious
with Claire (T) (6981057)

7.00 5 News; Weather (T) (5744078)

7.30 Champions of Nature Lisa Gould visits
Madagascar, home of the ring-tailed
lemur (5 Nov) (1501059)

8.00 Tausanmic Killer Where Eyewitness
accounts and reconstructions of giant
tidal waves, reaching 100ft in height and
travelling at speeds of up to 500 mph
created waves of volcanic activity on the sea
floor. These natural disasters
wreaked havoc for thousands of years

and threaten to do so again (7) (T);
News Update (1832298)

9.00 The Name of the Rose (1986) Sean Connery plays a friar investigating a series of mysterious murders at a 14th-century Italian monastery. Jean-Jacques Annaud's medieval whodunit based on Umberto Eco's bestselling novel, also starring Christian Slater, F. Murray Abraham, Michael Lonsdale and Ron Perlman. Directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud (T); 5 News (1386011)

10.30 Maelstrom: Big Night in With Wind Sassoon (1793328)

12.05am UK Raw A homecam ad website (2/10) (4644477)

12.35 Live NHL Ice Hockey Richard Orford and Todd MacKinnon report on the Western Conference clash between St Louis Blues and Los Angeles Kings (52855036)

4.00 The Movie Chart Show News and reviews (7) (652020)

5.05 Movie On Up (7) (46434941)

5.30 100 Per Cent (7) (9535816)

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HISTORY

4:00pm The Civil War The P. P. & P.
 Resolution 5:00pm Classic Cars
 5:00pm The 100th Anniversary of the
 Warzone The Iron Horse

CARLTON FOOD

5:00pm Food Network Daily 9:30
 Kitchen Colony 10:00 Feasts of the
 Kitchen 11:00 The Food Network
 Cooking? 11:30 A Slice of the
 12:00pm Food Network Daily
 1:00pm The Food Network Daily
 College 1:30 From the Ground Up
 2:00pm The Food Network Daily
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LIVING

6:00pm Tiny Tim and Drew 8:00 Johnson
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SEE TV

5:00pm Lolly Pop Daily 9:30 Muzo
 Tin And About 8:00 Yoochie-a-Go
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Business Report 6.30 Saleesh 8.00 P
The Love Stones 10.00 Sofia
Aashena 11.30 Parampara 12
FILLIE: Dim Day Sunday 3.30
3.30 Hum Peachy 4.00 Akbar Birb
Ek Minute 5.00 Jungle Book 5.30
6.00 Top of the Tops 6.30 Banegi Ap
7.00 Baat Ban Jaye 7.30 It's My
8.00 News 8.30 Amanat 9.00 H
10.00 Blue Pe Idola 13.00 Woh
Punkshetra 12.00am News
Tendroot Masala 1.00 Zee Bangla
ahat 2.00 FILLIE: Tassil Movie: Dera
val No Villain

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RACING 43

Favourite for 1,000
Guineas sustains
fatal injury on gallops

SPORT

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24 1999

GOLF 46

World's finest gather
in California for
ultimate test of skill

Old guard comes under heavy fire

Baron seeks to drive RFU forward

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

FRANCIS BARON, the Rugby Football Union's (RFU) chief executive for no more than five months, delivered a withering critique yesterday of the ills that have cost the RFU so much in financial and moral terms. "If this were a plc," Baron said, "heads would have rolled long ago."

It is Baron's brief to make the RFU the "financial powerhouse" of rugby in the British Isles within the next three years. To do so, he must drag it out of the morass of bureaucracy and debt that has accumulated over the past four years and restore the authority that once came naturally to the country that founded the game but whose popularity in world terms has never been lower.

He painted a bleak picture, when he joined last October, of demoralised staff embracing a "culture of resignation", of a lack of responsibility and accountability or of any formal business plans, of regular reports from the union's different areas within a governing body including 56 committees generating a "mountain of paperwork".

Although the union has budgeted for a £1.4 million loss in the present financial year, Baron estimates that it will be more like £2.3 million, given legal costs and the poor financial return from England's World Cup qualifying games at Huddersfield. Budge Rogers, the RFU junior vice-president who has produced a report on the future structure of the union, was equally sombre.

"I was appalled, returning to the game after a long time away, by what had gone on in the RFU Council," Rogers said. "Discussion of minutiae by over 50 people, not just at one meeting but at the next

and the next." It is his task to convince a special meeting of the union on March 28 of the need to reduce the council members to around 43, to reduce the number of committees to three and to strengthen the existing constituent bodies.

When Rogers, as a player, sat on Sir George Mallaby's review of the RFU in 1972, the union's turnover was £130,000. Now it is more than £30 million and has the potential to be ten times that figure if Baron, who has already slashed staffing levels by nearly 20 per cent, can achieve his "lean and focused" management levels and offer the union's potential commercial partners a governing body "organised in a way they can understand and respect".

Not the least of the union's woes has been the increased amount of money paid to consultants and lawyers; over the past two years the RFU has lost £10.3 million yet increased staff by 59 per cent and, in the past financial year, legal fees doubled to £520,600. Since then, the union has been

fined twice by the International Rugby Board (IRB), quite apart from the brief period when England were suspended from the Five Nations Championship.

"We want to restore good working relationships with the IRB and are considering the best way of achieving that," Baron said. He also hopes to sit down with his Five Nations colleagues to discuss the accord over the championship, after England's failure to acknowledge it swiftly enough caused the temporary rupture last month. It clearly remains an irritant to England that the contributions of France and, next season, Italy to commercial arrangements for the championship have yet to be defined.

"We are not going to adopt a passive attitude going forward," Baron said, in an acknowledgement that since he took up his post, the RFU has been firefighting on several fronts. Yet his management board has yet to determine its stance on payment of IRB fines — administered over the complaint by English clubs to the European Commission and the Anglo-Welsh series — and must do so early next month when the appeal period will have ended.

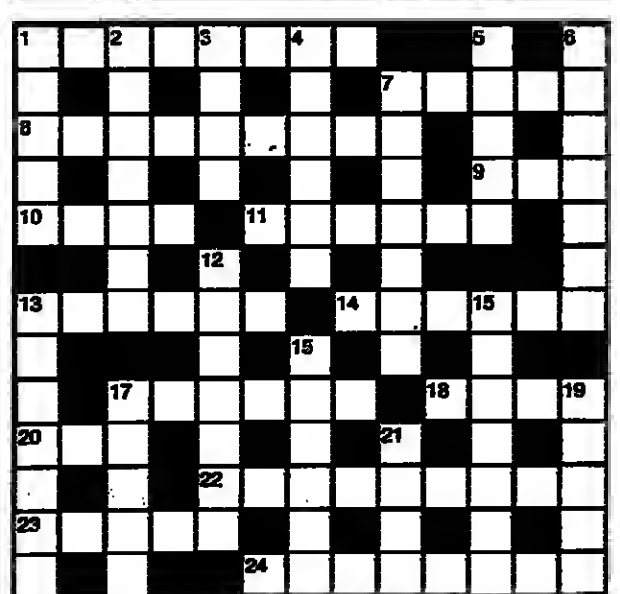
"We are maintaining a dialogue with the IRB because we both want to find the right way forward," Baron said. An appeal would only add to the union's mounting legal costs, as would any further disputes with leading clubs in the event of, say, Bristol pushing through a wholesale merger with London Scottish or Cardiff buying into an Allied Dunbar Premiership club. Baron acknowledges the loopholes existing in rugby's regulations, which were framed for a less commercial — and litigious — era, but insists that new rules cannot be rushed through if they do not take account of national and European law.

Simon Barnes, page 45



Baron: bleak picture

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1649

- ACROSS
- 1 Killing the king (8)
 - 7 A snap (5)
 - 8 Future generations (9)
 - 9 Droop (3)
 - 10 Fight of honour (4)
 - 11 Withdraw (heresy) (8)
 - 13 London suburb; type of comedy (6)
 - 14 A reflector (6)
 - 17 Elaborately decorated (6)
 - 18 Rough edge: West Country r sound (4)
 - 20 Swindle: pain: college servant (3)
 - 22 Government admin (street) (9)
 - 23 Make straight (5)
 - 24 Keep in mind (8)
- DOWN
- 1 Swift (5)
 - 2 Mrs —, wrote Cranford (7)
 - 3 Head of kitchen (4)
 - 4 Spout rubbish (6)
 - 5 Litoral: freewheel (5)
 - 6 Less smooth (7)
 - 7 Egypt monument (7)
 - 12 Mysterious (7)
 - 13 Mourful: type of couplet (7)
 - 15 Edible plant: crowd-scene word (7)
 - 16 Dismantle (camp, set): pin-demeolishing bowl (6)
 - 17 Whence: Masfield's quinquennium (5)
 - 19 Governor (5)
 - 21 Historian monk: sounds like droplet (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1648

ACROSS: 1 Hepworth 5 Hope 7 Recurrently 8 Span 9 Extant 10 Entomb 13 Hag 14 Derive 17 Obols 18 Hire 19 Megalomania 20 Nest 21 Kingship

DOWN: 1 Hoghead 2 Wren 3 Round the clock 4 Here we go again 5 Honest 6 Phlegm 7 Raft 11 Olivia 12 Butler 15 Effort 16 Intact 18 Hiss

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